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SOUTHERN COMMERCIAL CONVENTIONS 1837-1859

BY
HERBERT WENDER

L. C.

A DISSERTATION
Submitted to the Board of University Studies of the Johns Hopkins University in Conformity with the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
1927

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PREFACE

The writer is indebted to Dr. J. H. Latané and to Dr. Broadus Mitchell of the Johns Hopkins University, who have given him valuable advice in preparing this study. It was at Dr. Mitchell's suggestion that the work was undertaken and under Dr. Latané's helpful guidance that it was completed.

H. W.

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SOUTHERN COMMERCIAL CONVENTIONS
1837-1859

CHAPTER I

The Beginning of the Convention Movement

The early nineteenth century introduced America to the Industrial Revolution and the dominant rural South to an enterprising rival. During the next two decades the Northern States were gradually acquiring new economic interests, and manufacturers, capitalists, and wage workers were beginning to gain political power and influence commensurate with that enjoyed by the landed and commercial classes. Concentration of capital, the national bank, protection to industry, the spread of free labor and centralization of government were the forces aligned against decentralization, free trade, and slavery. The Northern States were rapidly gaining wealth, power and national control, while the Southern States were at a relative standstill and were forced to compromise.

Moreover, it was believed that the parvenus in the North were really flourishing at the expense of their aristocratic brethren in the warmer states; and so the South from time to time gave expression to innumerable complaints against the Federal Government, in Congress, in state legislatures and in the press; and whenever the tariff and slavery issues became tense there were threats of economic retaliation, boycotts, and secession. Leagues were often formed which bound themselves not to buy from the Northern States any goods which were protected by the tariff from foreign competition, and merchants sometimes assembled and solemnly pledged themselves not to purchase from or traffic directly or indirectly with any abolitionists.[1] "Our trade is essential to the North," it was

[1] Niles' Register, XXXV, 15, 48, 60, 83; J. B. McMaster, History of the People of the United States, VI, 38-40, 281, 282.

argued; "without it their cities had been fishing villages; withdraw it, and they will soon fall into decay. We shall then cease to be dependent on the North. Our cities will thrive, our trade increase, our citizens enjoy the immense profit of a business now monopolized by New York, and the South receive some recompense from sustaining almost the entire burden of the government of the Union." [2]

"Whoever controls the wealth of a land likewise controls its legislation" was a truism that soon dawned on the wiser and more constructive leaders of the South, who intelligently reflected on the comparative poverty of their section. With sentimental reminiscence and in glowing figures they recalled their old prosperity and power, and decided that the only way to restore the glory of the past and to save their institutions and society from abolition or decay was by establishing the economic independence of the slave-holding states. To bring this about, diversification of industry was necessary and, above all, direct trade from Southern ports to Europe. Isolated retaliatory measures frequently taken were now deemed ineffective. There must be united effort and concert of action on the part of all loyal Southerners. And so to enlist the sympathy of all the slave-holding states in a movement for commercial emancipation, the Southern convention came into being.

There were three more or less distinct periods in this movement. The first included a group of meetings in Augusta and Charleston between 1837 and 1839, which were primarily interested in direct trade with Europe. The second series met in Memphis and New Orleans, and manifested the South's desire for railroads and internal improvements. The third group was the most intensely Southern and assembled annually at various cities from the year 1852 to the outbreak of the Civil War.

The immediate occasion for the first conference seems to have been the panic of 1837. In July of that year William Dearing and other citizens of Athens, Georgia, issued a circular, which was broadcasted throughout the South, inviting all

[2] Ibid., p. 282.

interested merchants to gather at Augusta in October to consider the commercial situation of the slave states. The call was as follows:

Sir:

A crisis has arrived in the commercial affairs of the South and Southwest; a crisis the most favorable that has occurred since the formation of the American Government to attempt a new organization of our commercial relations with Europe. We ought to be our own importers and exporters, for the very best reason, that we furnish nearly all the articles of export in the great staples of cotton, rice and tobacco. This is a singular advantage for any people to enjoy. Yet, with all this in our favor by nature, we employ the merchants of the Northern cities as our agents in this business. They export our immense valuable productions, and import our articles of consumption—and from this agency they derive a profit which has enriched them; and as long as it continues, will enrich them at our expense. It has indeed, either directly or indirectly, made the whole of the North and Northwest what they are. It is time this unequal state of things should cease; that we should look to the natural advantages of our situation as Southern men, and take measures to secure to ourselves the full enjoyment of them.

Should your views be in accordance with ours, we propose, respectfully, that a convention of Southern and Western merchants be held in the city of Augusta, Georgia, on the third Monday in October next, then and there to take into consideration the whole subject, as it stands connected with our present and future interests.

We beg that you will not think lightly of the matter. It is a most important one, involving the interests of millions yet unborn.[3]

John C. Calhoun, the celebrated Southern statesman, was also of the opinion that the times were most favorable for uniting the whole South in bringing about her commercial, industrial, and financial independence of the North,[4] and he advised his brother to attend the Augusta convention: "Abbeville must send her delegates. You and McDuffie ought to be two of them. Let a meeting be called at the court-house and nominations be made."[5] It was also during these hectic days that he thought a "Southern convention at the earliest period that the South can be brought to act, indispensable."[6]

On the seventeenth of October, 1837, the first convention assembled at Augusta, Georgia; but only two states were represented—South Carolina and Georgia. This initial meeting served as a sort of preliminary convention with the main pur-

[3] Niles' Register, LII, 369.
[4] J. C. Calhoun, Correspondence, pp. 377, 381.
[5] Ibid., p. 379.
[6] Ibid., p. 386.

pose of familiarizing the South with her conditions and of enlisting public opinion in behalf of the schemes proposed.

Boastful optimism, that proverbial characteristic of American business men, was the prevailing sentiment at the meeting, as a sympathetic editor wrote: "The feeling which has animated the members of the convention and others in attendance, is such as will carry triumphantly through the great work of achieving the commercial independence of the South, and giving her that preponderance in the Union, to which her vast resources have long since entitled her." [7]

George McDuffie, of South Carolina, as chairman of a select committee, read a report describing the commercial status of the South, past and present, and offered remedies for improvement. The paper began with a criticism of protective tariff, though it referred to the compromise of 1833 as being conceived in a liberal and magnanimous spirit and predicted that it would, if effectually executed, "perpetuate the political harmony which it was the means of restoring." Nevertheless, it was the opinion of the committee that the system of high protective duties combined with discriminatory federal disbursements of revenue had enormously enhanced foreign importation by Northern cities to the detriment of the Southern States. It was unjust and incompatible with the interests of the Southern people to divert commerce from Southern to Northern ports and then to levy transit duties on foreign manufactures destined to planters and farmers of the South.

The people were then called upon to throw off the system of tribute and declare their complete commercial emancipation, resolution on the part of patriotic citizens being the only thing necessary to accomplish the desired aims. The report then gave a survey of the imports and exports of the United States for the fiscal year 1836, presenting the following figures:

	Imports	Exports
Total of United States in 1836	$190,000,000	$107,000,000
New York (alone)	118,000,000	19,800,000
States south of the Potomac and on the Gulf of Mexico (combined)	20,000,000	78,000,000
South Carolina and Georgia	3,400,000	24,000,000

[7] Southern Patriot, Charleston, October 22, 1837.

Thus New York imported six times the amount of her exports, while the Southern States imported a little more than one-fourth of the amount of theirs, and South Carolina and Georgia imported less than one-seventh part of the value of theirs. Besides, most of the imports of the Southern States were products from the West Indies and Mexico and were not sent in exchange for cotton and other Southern staples. This disparity was said to be ruinous to the prosperity of the staple producing states which were the sole foundation of American foreign commerce. New York, Pennsylvania, and Massachusetts, according to the state rights principle assumed in the report, were foreign communities, and the wealth they acquired was not wealth for South Carolina and Georgia, but on the contrary, it was abstracted from the wealth of the cotton country. In the year 1836, the Northern cities imported seventy-two millions of foreign merchandise, which was purchased by the staples of the Southern States, and fairly constituted a part of their foreign commerce. Now, since the excess of the exports of the South beyond her imports was sixty millions of dollars, it follows that the people of these states sustained a loss of over ten million dollars by the indirect course of their foreign commerce.

However, there was no complaint against the citizens of the North for reaping the harvest sown by Southern planters. The purpose was to stimulate the enterprise of Southern merchants and thus to recover, by fair and equal competition the advantages they had lost. It was admitted that New York had some natural advantages as an importing city, but only for the foreign commerce of the New England and Middle States. Every merchant who was practically acquainted with the subject knew that freights from Liverpool to Charleston or Savannah were lower than from Liverpool to New York. This was one of the natural incidents of a direct trade. Vessels coming from Europe for cotton would, of course, prefer bringing merchandise to a great cotton market where a direct exchange could be effected, than to a city a thousand miles distant from the market. It was asserted that rent, labor, and

general expenses of living were much higher in New York than in Charleston or Savannah, and that in general, natural advantages were rather on the side of Southern seaports. Cotton could certainly be obtained cheaper in New Orleans, Mobile, Savannah, and Charleston than in any Northern city; thus it was to the interest of foreign manufacturers to purchase their raw material directly from these ports, and manufactures would of course cost less were it not for the expenses, charges, and risks of an indirect importation through New York. The proposed system would not only supersede the complex machinery of intermediate transfers and agencies of an indirect trade, but would also, to a great extent, substitute barter or direct exchange for the use and agency of money. The cotton of the South was the actual capital which sustained four-fifths of the country's foreign commerce and credits were obtained in Europe upon the faith of that capital alone.

Should the people of the South, the report continues, with "these palpable facts staring them in the face, any longer remain obnoxious to the reproach of owning and furnishing the capital of our foreign commerce, and yet permitting the people of distant communities to enjoy its golden profits?" Commercial dependence was as degrading to character as it was injurious to prosperity and it was the patriotic duty of every political community to unite and control all the elements of national wealth. The Southern States derived most of their wealth from agricultural productions, which found their markets principally in foreign countries. It was the demand of that market chiefly which gave them their value, and from that market the South obtained most of the various consumable commodities. Since foreign commerce was an element of the South's wealth as essential as agriculture, it was obvious that the South had surrendered her general independence by entrusting the almost exclusive agency of conducting a great national interest to the citizens of other and distant states; for commercial independence was indispensable to the preservation of political independence. Southern institutions were distinguished from Northern by the peculiar and inseparable

connection they had with the great staple production and should be absolutely exempt from all foreign scrutiny and interference. Persistent intermeddling by officious outsiders might bring about an unfortunate result, namely, the dismemberment of the American Union; and the South must prepare for such a contingency or her foreign commerce would be utterly deranged. It was, therefore, a duty that this commerce as well as agriculture be carried on by every one loyal to Southern institutions, Southern tradition, Southern society.

The report then expatiates on the remedy. In order to reclaim the trade lost by the indirect course it was necessary to overcome a few obstacles, more or less great. The principal of these was the alleged want of money capital required to purchase cotton, to convert it into foreign goods, and to distribute these to the retail merchants. Southern business men being nearer to the great fund by which credit was to be ultimately redeemed and which was, therefore, more easily available to them, had a decided advantage over the Northern merchants and would in time organize a more perfect credit system than any that had theretofore existed. They were nearer to the consumers, knew better the extent and nature of their wants, and could supply them by a more rapid operation involving less delay and requiring shorter credits from abroad. A system of short credits and quick returns in foreign transactions was recommended for adoption by Southern importers. In order to effect this plan cooperation between planter and consumer was essential, and a radical economic change must take place. When planters asked for long credit the merchants wanted an equally long credit, and as a result, the importer had to be supplied with a large money capital.

The cotton producers were called upon to abandon their inefficient credit methods and also to broaden their farming pursuits or diversify their occupations. Much of the capital necessary to carry on the foreign commerce, it was claimed, could be procured and the South would be benefited, merchant as well as planter, if the latter would alter his usual manner

of borrowing. It would be most advisable for every planter to adopt the system of expending in the current year the income of the year preceding, and of making all his purchases for cash, instead of on credit. Furthermore, a considerable money capital could be easily supplied by the planters if they, instead of foolishly devoting their entire income to the purchase of slaves, would appropriate a moderate portion to the enterprise of importing. The existing practice of the planter in using the cotton crop of one year as a means of increasing that of the next was a fatal policy, resulting in over-production, price depression, and in the consequent benefit of the foreign and domestic consumers rather than of the producer. It was the law of supply and demand in full play. No class of producers suffered so much from over-production as the cotton planters, because they were so widely dispersed over an immense territory and were therefore unable to consult or cooperate with one another. They should invest a fair proportion of their net annual income in some other profitable pursuit, instead of putting it in land and negroes. There was no field that promised more abundant reward to industry and enterprise than the direct importation of foreign merchandise through Southern seaports. One-half of the net income of the cotton planters thus applied for a few years only, would furnish abundant capital for conducting the entire foreign commerce of the South.

The capital having been procured, the next move would be the establishment of more efficient intercourse between the importing cities and the vast interior which they were destined to supply with the manufactures of foreign countries. Railroad communication between the Southern Atlantic and the navigable waters of the West was an absolute necessity. No patriotic citizen of the South could fail to be enthusiastic over the beneficial effects which would be produced on their commercial, social, and political relations by opening a direct connection with the great valley of the Mississippi. It would form an indissoluble bond of union between communities whose interests were closely interwoven and would give a ten-

fold activity to the commercial cities of the South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico. In addition it would be a boon to the Westerners, for their merchandise would no longer go and come by artificial and expensive routes but through markets and roads that were half the distance and one-sixth in point of time. It obviously behooved the South and West to open the natural channels of trade and insure their people cheap and expeditious communication. As a matter of fact, many railroads were already nearly half completed and these would soon be continued to the waters of the Mississippi. But in this work it was advisable that localities forego their own predilections for that of the common good, and let that line be adopted which should be the shortest, cheapest and best. Then it would soon come to pass that the prosperity of the importing cities would be reflected in all its splendor throughout the interior country, for when Southern commerce would flourish the entire South would feel its salutary effects.

In urging Southern merchants to enter upon this revolutionary enterprise the committee maintained that it was not actuated by any ill-feeling toward the North but considered the projects purely as a matter of expediency. They were animated not by hostility to Northern interests but by regard to Southern. "Free trade with all the world, untrammeled by legislative restrictions" was their motto; and they opposed an absorbing centralism in commerce, just as they fought centralization in government. Business panics were unavoidable consequences of the artificial monopoly of money power in the city of New York, and these would at least be less destructive were the commerce of the United States fairly distributed through its natural channels. The people of the Southern States were invoked by patriotic considerations as well as by enlightened self-interest to embark on their splendid enterprise of achieving commercial independence.[8]

In addition to the report the select committee also offered four resolutions for adoption by the convention. Mr. McDuffie spoke in favor of the resolutions. He was followed by Joseph

[8] Daily Republican, Savannah, October 23, 1837. Southern Patriot, Charleston, October 23, 1837.

Cumming, of Savannah, Seaborn Jones, of Columbus, and Mr. Chappell, of Macon, all of whom discussed at length the advantages expected to result from the convention if the citizens of the South would only give its objects the consideration they deserved. Mr. Seaborn Jones presented the following resolution: It is a sacred duty which the citizens of the Southern States owe to themselves, their posterity, and their country, to give a decided preference where the terms are equal, in procuring their supplies, to their own merchants who carried on a direct trade with foreign nations. This was adopted.[9] Mr. C. J. Jenkins, in behalf of the Augusta delegation, offered the following: "That as an introduction to a direct importing system at the South, it is indispensably necessary that the crop of the present year should be directly exported by Southern merchants and planters, and that to effect this object the Southern banking institutions should lend such aid as they safely and conveniently can." This was adopted. The delegates further passed the following resolutions:

1. That in the opinion of this convention the present conjuncture of our commercial affairs is eminently propitious for the establishment of a system of direct importations through our Southern and Southwestern cities, and that we are called upon by every consideration of interest and of patriotism to throw off the degrading shackles of our commercial dependence.
2. That with a view to induce public spirited capitalists to embark in this business, the people of the staple growing states be recommended to give public manifestations of their determination to encourage and sustain importations through their own seaports.
3. That two committees be appointed by the president of this convention to memorialize respectively the Legislatures of Georgia and South Carolina on the subject of limited co-partnerships.
4. That a committee be appointed to prepare an address to the people of the Southern and Southwestern States setting forth the advantages and practicability of carrying on a direct trade with foreign nations—exhibiting in detail the extent of their resources.
5. That said committee in preparing such address, embody and conform to the views of the convention as expressed in the preamble and resolutions adopted.

The president appointed the following delegates to serve on this committee: George McDuffie, Chairman, Thomas Butler

[9] Daily National Intelligencer, Washington, October 30, 1837. Savannah Republican, October 23, 1837.

King, Henry N. Cumming, A. H. Campbell, and James Gadsden. It was decided to hold the next meeting in April 1838 at Augusta.[10]

The second convention was a more elaborate affair than the one of 1837, seven states being represented this time—Virginia, North Carolina, Tennessee, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, and South Carolina; and it was a respectable body of two hundred delegates including some of the most prominent and intelligent men of the Southern States.[11]

Reports and resolutions were for the most part similar in tone and content to those of the previous meeting. It was declared that a direct trade was a natural channel of communication between nations, which offered to each other the best market for their natural productions, and that the intervention of a third party must operate as a tax upon the exchanges between them; that the Southern States of this Union afforded those staples with which were purchased nearly the whole foreign imports of the country; that they were the consumers of a large portion of these imports, and ought naturally themselves to furnish the channel through which the exchange was made; that on no occasion had their citizens been found incapable of maintaining themselves in fair competition with other sections, and that the diversion of their trade from its natural channels must have been brought about by the unequal action of the Federal Government and by the abstraction of the people towards other pursuits.[12]

The convention was of the opinion that since such a state of things was unnatural and detrimental it should no longer continue;

> that the present condition of the commercial relations of the country, and the disruption of the existing channels of trade, afford an opportunity of breaking down the trammels which have so long fettered our commerce and of restoring to the South its natural advantages, and that it is incumbent upon every man who has at heart the good of his country, to lend his best exertions to the promotion of these objects, and to establish our trade upon a sound and permanent basis.

[10] Savannah Republican, April 4, 1838.
[11] Richmond Enquirer, April 10, 1838.
[12] Baltimore American, April 13, 1838.

It further advocated, as conducive to the restoration of the direct foreign trade of the South, the establishment, by manufacturers in foreign countries, of agencies in the chief Southern ports for the sale of various articles exported by them to the United States. Internal improvements intended to connect the Southern and Southwestern states were presented as worthy of the unanimous support of the meeting, and the establishment of banking facilities with a view to direct exchanges with distant countries was urged as among the most efficient methods of bringing about the proposed object.[13]

Among the speeches made at the convention, one by Col. Memminger, of South Carolina, attracted the widest attention. The cause of the general depression, the ruin of Southern agriculture and commerce was attributed to the tyranny and oppression of the tariff system. He described the South as an afflicted country blessed with fertility but producing no fruit; while the North with people no more intelligent and fields less rich, was progressing with great strides. Before the war of 1812 the Southern States were eminently prosperous, advancing with a rapidity unparalleled and unknown in any country in history—commerce flourished, and the "smiling fields" produced rich and abundant crops. When the war with England came the large harvests were useless and commodities lay rotting in their warehouses. Then in 1816 began the system of federal legislation which by 1832 had reduced the South to an "abject state of colonial vassalage," the persistence of which would ultimately ruin the Southern States.

In addition to the protective tariff, the United States Bank had also been used to foster Northern manufactures and with these two discriminating institutions commerce soon became concentrated in Northern cities. Benefited by the high duties, aided by the United States Bank and by long credit the Northern merchants were enabled to outstrip the Southern importers and at the expense of the latter. Commerce thus being centered in Northern cities, nearly all the revenue collected was retained in those places.

[13] Savannah Daily Republican, April 4, 5, 6, 1838.

Col. Memminger then called upon the Southern people to concentrate their capital in their own section; he requested banks to loan money to importers, and finally appealed to patriotic parents to train their youth to mercantile and business pursuits and habits. Southern young men, he said, had hitherto made distinction in other spheres and had left the field of trade to outsiders, who had come among them to do business for a while and then leave, thereby enriching themselves and impoverishing their customers.[14]

On the last day the delegates were given a dinner by the citizens of Augusta, at which eloquence in addition to the conventional beverage flowed freely and long. Sentiments were expressed in honor of each state represented and were responded to beautifully by the respective delegates. There is significance as well as interest in the following toasts offered:

To our country—The whole must prosper when every part takes care of itself.

The Convention—May the success of its measures equal the patriotism that prompted it.

Southern Commerce—With Southern resources, she need only arouse Southern enterprise to the rescue.

The Northern States—Let us show that in honorable enterprise brothers may compete and be brothers still.

The Augusta Declaration of Independence of April 4, 1838—Worthy of the sacred pledge of our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor.

The Union of the Atlantic and the Western Waters—Its object like that of the first union solemnized in the Garden of Eden to be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth.

The South—May she never enter again the list of president making until she is untied from all shackles, nor support any one who is not like Caesar's wife, even beyond suspicion with regard to Southern institutions.

The Southern and Southwestern States—United in their commercial and political destiny; united they stand, divided they fall.[15]

The last toast, made by George McDuffie, when published in the Charleston papers brought forth a critical communication from a person writing above the signature "Union." He wanted to know what political destiny was peculiar to the Southern and Southwestern States which was not common to the Northern and Northwestern, and he was startled at the

[14] Charleston Courier, April 11, 1838.

[15] Ibid., April 6, 1838; Savannah Daily Republican, April 7, 1838.

use of insinuating terms in times of civil broil and revolution. Mr. Calhoun and Mr. McDuffie, of course, meant no harm, proceeded the letter, but this allusion to the political destinies of one section of the Union was "like talking to a friend with a bowie knife in your hand just to trim your nails,—it looks ugly, if you don't mean anything by it." [16]

On October 15, 1838, the third commercial convention was held again at Augusta, Georgia, eight states being represented. James Gadsden was elected chairman of the meeting. It was decided to appoint a committee of twenty-one members to consider and report on the objects of the convention. The president chose the following men to serve on this committee:

Judge A. B. Longstreet, Adam Johnston, John P. King, William Dearing, J. Godder, Joel Branham, and J. M. Berrien, of Georgia; Ker Boyce, I. E. Holmes, John Bryce, Patrick Noble, John Frampton, James Hubbard, and O. J. Reese, of South Carolina; A. H. Keith and John Moss, of Tennessee; A. A. Dexter, T. Pollard, A. J. Pickett, and L. M. Stone, of Alabama; and George B. Wilds, of Mississippi.[17]

The following resolutions were referred to the consideration of the committee of twenty-one: That joint stock companies be formed to assist in promoting a direct import and export trade; that Southern state legislatures be recommended to adopt a liberal system of internal improvement; that, whereas "the Southerners are a people too much inclined to talk and too little inclined to act," it would be advisable for the committee in studying ways and means of inducing merchants to patronize Southern ports, to make certain that the plans be most practicable ones.

The next day Judge Longstreet as chairman of the committee, reported back six resolutions which with only one change were adopted by the delegates in assembly. 1. That the members of the convention use their best exertions in their respective states, to form trading associations, in order to carry into effect the purposes of the convention. 2. That they

[16] Charleston Courier, April 6, 1838.
[17] Ibid., October 17, 1838.

increase the facilities of intercommunication by railroads and canals between the interior Western and South Atlantic States and those on the Gulf of Mexico. 3. Internal improvement companies or corporations should consider their works as but parts of one great design to establish a perfect commercial system. 4. That the banking institutions of the respective states in which they were located offer aid to those great works which were intended to develop the resources of the interior and which would reciprocate to those institutions the benefits of an increasing and extended commerce. 5. That states be recommended to charter railroads with banking privileges. 6. That banks of the several states ought to form commercial connection with like institutions or capitalists of Europe for the purpose of furnishing facilities for a direct trade between the Southern States and the Old World. The fifth resolution calling for state help led to much discussion, Mr. J. H. Hammond, of South Carolina, asking that it be erased. A conciliatory substitute was offered by Mr. C. J. Jenkins, of Augusta, and it was unanimously adopted. This stated "that the legislature of each Southern state be recommended to inquire whether there be or not, in each state, a sufficiency of banking capital, and if found insufficient, to provide for its increase in such manner as may be deemed safest and most conducive to the interest of southern commerce." [18]

The convention unanimously viewed with deep regret the neglect of all commercial pursuits among the youth of the South, and earnestly recommended the speedy adoption by all their fellow citizens of measures to introduce commercial education for Southerners; to train young men in habits of business, and thereby "to establish a body of merchants whose every interest and feeling would be centered in the country which had reared and sustained them."

After the meeting adjourned the citizens of Augusta again manifested their hospitality by tendering a banquet to the visiting delegates, and there were the usual speeches and

[18] Niles' Register, IV, 188.

reciprocal felicitations. A toast was offered to the country and another to the Northern States—" Pioneers in enterprise, most honored when best imitated," followed by Yankee Doodle from an orchestra. A third toast was to the " Political and Commercial Independence—Our fathers fought for one—let their sons work for the other." [19]

The Augusta meetings of 1837-38 and their addresses to the people created considerable comment in the South, their reports and proceedings occupying prominent places in newspapers and leading magazines. Introducing an article on direct trade written for the Southern Literary Messenger, the editor referred to the subject as the most popular one which fell within the whole range of Southern discussion, and submitted the essay to the consideration of the South. An elaborate scheme to bring about direct trade was offered and the editor prayed that the readers study the question carefully; compare its advantages with its objections—its expenses with its prospects, and then judge for themselves. A Southern Atlantic Steam Navigation Company was being organized and he advised each member of the next convention to subscribe for not less than ten shares and pledge himself to procure among his constituents a subscription for at least one hundred shares of stock in that company.

The article referred to was written by a person associated with the United States Navy but otherwise anonymous.[20] There was no law forbidding the Southern merchant from exchanging his products with those of South America, China, the Indies, and Europe; nothing was wanting but the nerve and the capital of the South, controlled and regulated by well-directed energies. The example of a single capitalist in any of the Southern ports who should have a correct knowledge of the demands of trade would not fail to gain for his town in a short time a fair proportion of direct trade, such as that enjoyed by Baltimore, Philadelphia, or Boston. Patience, the exercise of proper talents, and enterprise of an individual or a single company were needed to build up Southern ports.

[19] Charleston Courier, October 17, 1838.
[20] Southern Literary Messenger, V, 2.

The writer then studied the verbose commercial conventions and their impracticable plans. He had watched these meetings with much interest but had always been disappointed in the reports of their proceedings, for it was not precept but example that the South needed. The resolutions passed in the conventions "not to buy Northern goods when they can get Southern, unless the Northern are the cheapest; not to freight Northern vessels when they can freight Southern, unless the Northern freight is less," and many others reminded him of the oath which Neptune and his crew demanded of sailors when the equator was first crossed, namely: "never to eat brown bread when one could get white, unless he preferred the brown; and never to kiss the maid, if he could kiss the mistress unless he liked the maid best." The enthusiastic resolvers unless they had been sworn by Old Neptune were advised to kiss the maid and eat brown bread, whether they liked it or not, and commence trading in their own vessels. If the Southern merchants would divert any part of the foreign trade into a new channel they must do more than hold conventions to resolve and re-resolve to meet again.

To overcome such a formidable competitor as New York, continued the writer, was a most stupendous undertaking, for although that city had acquired her commercial grandeur through artificial channels she had by gradual and incessant progress transformed those artificial channels into regular and popular routes. Before the South should attempt to reopen the natural roads and create new ones she should learn how New York attained and maintained her commercial supremacy and she should understand the nature of the obstacles to be removed. In the first place, the Southerners did not have the market of the North to receive nor the fleets of packets of New York to distribute their outgoing cargoes; then there must be something more for commerce than raw cotton, tobacco, tar, pitch, and turpentine. If the South would take away the sceptre of commercial eminence and divide commerce with the North, she must be more prodigal of her wealth, and go vigorously to work not with bulky traders but with modern packets, the liners of the day; not sail boats but

steam must be the weapon with which to attack the skillful and powerful fleets of New York. Without the help of steam and the improvements of the day, the commerce of the South must continue to dwindle.

The article concludes:

> Havre is ripe for a steam enterprise across the Atlantic and is ready to cooperate with any city in the Union. A line of steam ships from Norfolk to that place would be welcome and beneficial, but, whatever be done must be done quickly. Let the South bring her strong men to the enterprise and get up lines of splendid steamers to France and England, and let the first blow be aimed to divide with New York the facilities of communication, and then withdraw from her, if she can, a part of the travel, and then with her ships make a gallant stand behind her cotton bags, and if the struggle prove to be in vain and the proud spirit must remain in vassalage to her Northern lord and be ruined by tribute to New York, her sons will still be able to say that she graced her fall and made her ruin glorious.

There were some people in the South who were not so clamant about their commercial dependence and disapproved of a general Southern convention. They were of the opinion that such a meeting might arouse political prejudice and might generate a sectional spirit subversive of the American Union. Others believed there was no palpable ground to suspect the purposes of the Southern conventions, as they were attended by some of the "purest" politicians of all parties. It was also pointed out that the entire South did not regard the alleged economic evils in the same rueful manner, and that public feeling was not sufficiently aroused to make the movement completely representative of the Southern States.[21] Still others considered the meetings harmless affairs with some likelihood of effecting good, and worth while if only to display and show the people their possibilities.[22]

Local or state commercial conventions were more heartily approved, and Virginia, North Carolina and Georgia held such meetings now and then.[23] The largest and most prominent of these was the convention at Norfolk, in November 1838, which passed resolutions to encourage direct foreign trade, manu-

[21] Richmond Enquirer, October 5, 1838.
[22] Norfolk Herald, March 30, 1838; Savannah Daily Republican, April 4, 1838.
[23] Richmond Enquirer, June 1838, November 27, 1838.

factures, and internal improvements. North Carolina was also represented and another meeting was to take place at Raleigh. Edmund Ruffin, representing the agricultural interests of his state, made a report on conditions in Virginia and asked for legislative aid in promoting agricultural improvements. To encourage commercial enterprise the convention recommended the state legislature to abolish all state taxes on the importation of foreign goods and all taxes on retail storekeepers of such articles; and to increase their present banking capital on liberal terms in order to invite foreign investment.

As usual ardent Unionists here and there suspected hidden political designs. But John Tyler, destined to sit in the White House years hence, as chairman of the Norfolk convocation, warned the delegates against party prejudice; and the meeting generally manifested a sentiment of loyalty to the Union and at least verbal devotion to their Northern brethren. The temper of the convention may be gathered from the tone of the toasts offered at the feast tendered the visiting delegates. They drank and spontaneously greeted "Our Common Country—May the flag of the Union wave over her forever—for the interest of each of her states is the interest of all. To the Commercial Convention—the friend and not the foe of the Union. To North Carolina—The sons of her Mecklenburg Signers have done gallant fight for Southern commercial freedom and independence. The independence and Union of the United States can never be overthrown by any power on earth. May every true Virginian bear this in mind." Governor Tyler addressed the company in the warmest sentiments of patriotism. Colonel Hayne of South Carolina was one of the leading speakers on the occasion. He alluded in the happiest manner to the institutions, the commercial enterprise and the manufacturing industry of the North, and particularly to the State of Massachusetts whose merchants as a body were unsurpassed in intellectual and moral worth. Mr. Hayne concluded with a toast to "Our Brothers of the New England State, of whom the South are justly proud—It is our duty and our interest to cherish the most intimate commercial relations with

our Northern brethren, as well as other sections of our glorious Union—not, however, as dependents, but on terms of reciprocal advantage." [24]

However, just after the first Augusta convention, Mr. John Quincy Adams declared that he had read the proceedings of the meeting, the McDuffie report and the resolutions. He believed this movement to be the "germ of a Southern Convention, with South Carolina at its head, which is to divide this Union into a Northern, a Southern and a Western Confederacy, with Texas and a fourth part of Mexico annexed to the Confederacy of the South." He was also of the opinion that Calhoun and his followers were closely associated with this project, and that it was offensive to the North American Union and aimed against the progress of the abolition of slavery.[25] Somewhat milder criticism of these Southern agitative gestures emanated from a Baltimore editor. Although he could not withhold admiration of the Southern leaders for displaying such zeal, energy, and confidence in their proposed undertaking, he differed as to the practicability of the convention schemes. Experience would demonstrate the utter impossibility of carrying out the means proposed, and the result would be a complete and disastrous failure. Furthermore the movement was said to be an attempt to build up a Southern interest, distinct from that of any other portion of the national Union. The resolutions and reports, in the opinion of the Baltimore editor, were actuated by a spirit of total estrangement between the Southern and Northern interests, the latter having been treated as subversive of and uncongenial with the former. Patriotism to the writer was not bounded by the Potomac or the Hudson, nor was it limited to any particular section; he stood for the country, the whole country, one and indivisible, in prosperity and in adversity.[26] A New York writer regarded the conventions as mere trade meetings and wished the Southerners success in their endeavors. He even

[24] Ibid., November 16, 23, 1838.
[25] Memoirs of John Quincy Adams, IX, 421.
[26] Baltimore American, April 13, 1838.

promised to rejoice should the convention succeed in carrying into effective execution the measures which would revive the languishing fortunes of "our fine Southern seaports," and restore to them the vigorous prosperity they had once enjoyed.[27]

[27] New York Sun, April 27, 1839.

CHAPTER II

Plans for Commercial Independence

The fourth and largest of the early group of conventions was opened in Charleston on April 15, 1839.[1] South Carolina was represented by one hundred and seventy delegates, North Carolina sent three, Georgia, thirty-three, Alabama, five, Tennessee, five, Florida, three, and Mississippi, one. Among the prominent men of affairs attendant at the convention were: Chancellor Harper, William C. Preston, J. H. Hammond, Ker Boyce, Asbury Hull, James Gadsden, F. H. Elmore, C. G. Memminger, Wade Hampton, James Hamilton, E. Hamilton, R. B. Rhett, Hugh S. Legaré, Robert Y. Hayne, Langdon Cheves, Jr., A. B. Longstreet, Alexander H. Stephens, and William Dearing. Asbury Hull was chosen president, Chancellor Harper, vice-president and Richard Yeadon, Jr., of Charleston, secretary. There was a committee of twenty-one to prepare business for the convention and another committee of ten members consisting principally of merchants from the interior of the states represented. The function of the latter committee was to ascertain whether goods had not been imported and sold at Southern seaports, upon as good terms and at as fair rates, as could be procured at the Northern—and whether the country merchants could not now procure at the Southern seaports, as full a supply and as good assortments upon as fair terms and as favorable periods of payment, as could be procured elsewhere,—and whether there were any advantages in making purchases from the direct importers in the South.

The committee of twenty-one consisted of the following members: William Harper, Robert Y. Hayne, G. A. Trenholm, J. K. Douglass, F. H. Elmore, C. G. Memminger, and A. Blanding, from South Carolina; William Deering, A. D. Miller, D. C. Campbell, J. Phinizy, J. Cowles, and Alex.

[1] Journal of Proceedings, Charleston, April, 1839.

H. Stephens, from Georgia; John H. Crozier and Thomas C. Lyon, from Tennessee; Abner McGehee and E. A. Holt, from Alabama; Mitchell King and William Patten, from North Carolina; James Gadsden and William J. Mills, from Florida.

On the second day Gen. R. Y. Hayne read a report drawn up by the committee describing in detail the plans and purposes of the convention. A brief review, by way of introduction, recalled the fact that nearly two years had elapsed since the first commercial convention assembled in Augusta, for the purpose of promoting a direct export and import trade with foreign countries. Not much had been accomplished because of the presence of deeply rooted prejudices and conflicting interests and because habits and traditional pursuits of a people could be changed only by slow degrees. Yet the profound conviction remained that commercial independence would determine the welfare, prosperity and honor of the South and so long as there was hope the plan that had been projected would not be abandoned.

Taking up the main body of the report, it was declared that the evil complained of was that the Southern States, while producing nearly three-fourths of the domestic exports of the Union, imported scarcely one-tenth of the merchandise received in exchange for them. Foreign commerce existed in the Northern States because of the production of Southern industry. Northern seaports flourished, Southern cities were falling into decay. Ten million dollars were lost to the South each year by this unfortunate miscarriage of commerce—the unfavorable course of foreign trade. The plantation states were being indirectly taxed, being deprived of the means of accumulating capital, the essential of commercial and industrial pursuits.

The most prominent cause of the subversion of Southern commerce was not Providence but the Federal government, for the industry of the cotton-growing states was depressed because of the high protective tariff. Nearly all government wants had been met by duties on foreign goods and almost

all the expenditures had gone to the Northern States, energizing their commercial industry, building up their cities while the South paid the bill. Demonstrating the magnitude of this evil of discrimination the report showed that the gross amount received from customs was nine hundred million dollars, three-fourths of which had been levied on goods received in exchange for Southern products and nine-tenths of it expended north of the Potomac. If all this money removed by the government from the Southern States and expended elsewhere had been left there to accumulate there would have been sufficient capital to realize a most prosperous foreign commerce and an extensive system of internal improvements. A very unfortunate consequence of this economic prostration was a lack of diversity of occupation, most citizens devoting themselves too exclusively to agriculture. Surplus incomes were used to extend plantations to produce more cotton instead of being invested in commercial pursuits and in public improvement which would have stimulated and strengthened the peculiar institutions of the South.

However, the causes which had brought about the depressed state of Southern commerce had in a great measure ceased to exist, and an opportunity was presented to improve conditions by removing the obstacles altogether, and regaining all that had been lost. The tariff already greatly reduced, was gradually receding to the revenue standard. In a little more than two years the Southern States would be relieved from a system which had sapped the very foundations of their prosperity and reduced them almost to a "state of colonial vassalage."

It was quite obvious, the report continued, that if the Southern States prior to the creation of the Federal Government and the adoption of the restrictive system, were actually able to carry on a profitable direct trade with all the world, that if this restriction should be removed there would be a resumption of that trade. No one could controvert the argument that the natural course of trade was to exchange directly the productions of different countries and that all

indirect and circuitous modes of intercourse must in general be less advantageous to the producers than the direct trade. If then the trade of the South had not, by adventitious causes, been forced out of its natural channels, cotton, rice, and tobacco, would naturally have found their way across the Atlantic from Southern seaports in ships owned by resident merchants, and it was equally certain that the goods received in exchange for those productions would have been returned through the same channels. By what extraordinary combination of circumstances, by what mighty magic could it have happened, that when the imports of the United States reached the enormous amount of one hundred and ninety million dollars, those of all the Atlantic States and the states of the Gulf of Mexico should have amounted only to twenty million; while at the same time, out of one hundred and seven million dollars of domestic exports, the latter actually exported seventy-eight million—South Carolina and Georgia furnishing exports to the amount of twenty-four million, and actually importing only three and one-half million. This extraordinary revolution was not caused by want of capital or of ships or from the unhealthiness of the climate or the want of enterprise on the part of the people (as was alleged), but only by the fact that the commercial capital formerly possessed by the Southerners had been withdrawn and diverted into other channels. What the staple growing states complained of was the unjust condition of affairs whereby the profits on commercial exchanges were enjoyed almost exclusively by those who did not live in these states, to the great injury of the South and her people.

Three causes were assigned for the commercial depression which must be removed before complete success could be expected: (1) the want of commercial capital adequate to the great demands of a direct export and import trade; (2) the want of a sufficient demand in Southern ports for the goods which in the event of the establishment of such a trade, would be received at these ports; (3) the want of a line of packets and steam ships running at stated periods

between these ports and those of Europe. Such difficulties could be surmounted and the wants could be supplied.

First,—To provide the capital necessary to carry on the desired direct trade. Southerners engaged in farming should invest a portion of their capital in commercial pursuits. To enable planters to do this, several state legislatures had already, at the instance of the convention, authorized the formation of limited copartnerships by which means the opportunity was afforded to every one of investing such portion of his capital as he might think proper in commercial pursuits. If every planter of the country would only contribute one-tenth of a single crop the deficiency in capital would be easily supplied and the profits from such an investment would be greater than profits from making more cotton.

An incidental advantage produced by the diversion of industry would be that some planters' sons would thereafter go in for mercantile occupations instead of entering the overflowing fields. As it was nearly all of them devoted themselves almost exclusively to cultural professions—in which so few succeeded—or they were set up with a few black slaves to plant barren lands, the usual consequence of which was emigration or ruin. Commercial education would elevate the character of trade and give increased dignity and importance to commercial pursuits.

Credit was to supply the place of capital to a great extent. Southern bankers were called on to establish credits in Europe, since it was expected that the great mass of the future business would be carried on through the medium of bills of exchange. These banks should offer liberal terms to the direct importer and enable him to realize the price of his goods, sold on credit to the country merchant, in time to meet his obligations. Paper received for these goods should be freely discounted whether it had more or less than six months to run. If the country banks would cooperate with the banks in the seaports Southern commerce would be tremendously aided.

Foreign capitalists were to be persuaded to invest in the

South. Europeans would be induced and encouraged to establish agencies and to form copartnerships for the organization of lines of packets and steamships. A commission of Southern intelligent and experienced merchants should visit England, France, Holland, and other countries, exhibit Southern resources, and in the name and on behalf of the Southern people, invite foreign merchants to unite with them in doing whatever might be necessary to establish a direct import and export trade on a permanent basis. Merchants and capitalists of Europe would not hesitate if their own interests were involved, and it certainly would be to their interest to engage in this work, and so the greatest difficulty encumbering the convention's project would be settled.

Sufficient capital for carrying on a direct trade having been obtained a second need should be considered,—internal improvements. The furnishing of a market for all goods that could be imported was quite important—indeed it was indispensable to ultimate success, that railroads, canals, and turnpikes must provide the great channels of communication stretching from ports to consumers in the interior. Fortunately railroad building everywhere throughout the South and Southwest was then already in progress. In the meanwhile or until these railroad connections could be established, prompt measures should be adopted, and especially by railroad companies, to prepare lines of communication by wagons. Internal development of travel was so interwoven with foreign commerce that the two could not be separated without the destruction of both. Finally, it should be remembered that the great work must be carried on in a liberal and patriotic spirit without jealousy and distrust, but with a determination to build up in the Southern section of the country one grand system of railroads.

Mitchell King, of North Carolina, submitted a report on taxation of commercial capital. He declared that the legislative power in the South was in the hands of the agriculturists, and as a result tax legislation had tended to discourage and depress commerce. Planters and farmers were

accustomed to pay taxes on their property according to its estimated value; their capital was fixed and could not escape from the impost while capital invested in trade was of a floating character. In paying a tax on land and agricultural capital, it was paid on what, almost without fail, yielded an income or profit, but in paying it on commercial capital, it was paid on what might or might not in the fluctuations of trade make either a profit or a loss. In face of such taxation large stocks of goods could not be accumulated by the merchants and goods were thus driven from the South that would otherwise have remained to seek a market.

To secure the trade at which the convention aimed and to which the South was justly entitled, large stocks of goods were indispensable. The foreign merchant and his brethren in the North should be encouraged to bring their goods South to await a sale with the full assurance that they would be subject to no taxation until sales had been effected. Then Southern warehouses might be seen filled with all kinds of commodities. The merchant of Manchester, or Leeds, or Lowell, would not hesitate to send his goods to be stored in them. The importing merchant would not have his capital diminished without the certainty of being able to make a profit to replace it.

It was believed that by a different system of taxation, by a different mode of laying taxes on the commercial community the evils hitherto obtaining would be done away with; and this could be done without a diminution of revenue. Let the tax be imposed on the income of the merchant, on the interest which he derived from the capital invested, and on the clear profit which he made. A moderate equitable tax on his income would assuredly make up for all that he would lose by abandoning the prevalent mode of taxing his capital. The states might well depend on his honor, on his ambition to hold or raise his standing among his competitors, or desire to maintain his credit for faithful returns.

Two resolutions closed the report:

1. That this convention earnestly recommend to the legislatures of the Southern and Southwestern states so to form their legislation as to encourage the accumulation of commercial capital in the Southern Atlantic and Southwestern seaports—in other words, to make these ports emporiums of commerce, and so far as may be practicable, free ports where the objects of trade may be collected, and remain exempt from all state or corporation taxation, until sales of them be effected—and that the taxes then be levied only on the interest of the capital invested in such sales and on the net profits derived from them. 2. This object could be best effected, by exempting capital employed in commerce from all taxation, except on annual tax on the interest and profits derived from the capital so invested.

On motion of William C. Preston the first resolution was changed and in its final form recommended to the respective legislatures of the Southern States so to frame their legislation, as to remove any unequal burden from trade and commerce and the accumulation of commercial capital within their respective territories. After some debate in which Messrs. King, Preston, Hayne, Longstreet, and others took part, the report with the resolution as amended, was adopted.

The Committee of Ten composed of merchants, dealers, and planters from the interior of the states represented, and appointed to investigate the conditions of Southern markets, past and present, presented their conclusions to the convention. They began optimistically by predicting the unquestionable success of the direct trade enterprise, but they also mentioned possibility of defeat by untoward action of the general government.

The report proceeds: The fiscal policy of the Federal Government in the collection and disbursement of its revenue had always been unfavorable to Southern commerce, and when the additional burdens of the protective system were thrown upon the industry and trade of the planting states, the disastrous effects were apparent in the deserted cities and ruined prospects which blighted the prosperity and the spirits of her people. An unpropitious policy transferred the trade which rightfully belonged to the South, to Northern ports and people. Discouraged by these burdens Southern capital sought more favorable locations for its employment, or engaged in other business—merchants and capitalists removing to the Northern ports with their funds, or withdrawing from commerce and investing in other employments; while others discouraged by their example, were not found to supply their places and attempt the business they had been forced to abandon. The importing mer-

chants of the South became an almost extinct race, and direct trade once so great, flourishing and rich, dwindled down to insignificance.

If the same state of things should continue the South would not be able to recover what it had lost. It was necessary to determine what changes and modifications in circumstances were needed to enable the South again to enter into the struggle for foreign commerce. Some changes had several years been in progress, slowly but beneficially, and there had been a few ameliorations. Every biennial reduction of the tariff was an impulse to enterprise and trade. It had already caused much capital to return to the South, and state legislatures had wisely encouraged the efforts. It was hoped they would do much more for this great and vital measure, by lightening the remaining burdens which oppressed commercial capital in the heavy taxation on its employment. Oppressive taxation imposed by national legislation had been somewhat lightened and should be reduced even more; firms were gradually reappearing and embarking large capital for importations. There was no reason why foreign goods used in Southern consumption could not be bought by Southern merchants at the place of their production and brought directly to Southern markets as cheaply as they could be taken to the Northern markets by their merchants.

Comparing Northern and Southern ports it was found that in the South the ports were good and safe and open all the year to ships, while in the North many and considerable obstructions existed during the winter from cold and ice. The same might be said of their internal communications, the rivers and canals of the North being frozen and the railroads obstructed by snows and often for considerable periods of time. In the summer the Southern ports were not so healthful and their intercourse with the interior markets was less in amount and activity. But the establishment of railroads permitting the most rapid travel and extended improvements in sanitation had made the previously unhealthful districts perfectly safe and had greatly diminished the impediments of summer trade.

It was true that New York could generally sell its merchandise as low or lower than Charleston in its own stores; but the Southern country merchant asked could he receive his goods, at his home, cheaper from New York than from Charleston, or any other Southern port. If he bought lower in New York and the expenses of getting the goods home made the cost more than if he got them from Southern ports, his own interests as well as sectional loyalty would influence him to buy at his own ports. Traffic expenses were greater in New York than in Charleston; house rents and store rents were twice or three times as high; clerks' wages were higher, and the expenses of families and living considerably greater.

Another thing which it was believed enhanced substantially the price of goods, was the manner in which the mercantile business was done in New York. The importer, there, as a general rule, did not deal directly with the country merchant. He imported in bales and packages which he did not break but sold in bales and packages, quantities too large for country merchants. The business was also divided among almost as many distinct classses of importers as there were distinct classes of goods. Assortments in quantities to suit the dealer or country merchant could only be had from another class of merchants called jobbers, who were the regular customers of the importers. If the latter sold to the country

merchant it was usually for cash or on such rates and terms as would not interfere with the jobbers, who were their chief dependence and necessary to their business. The importer's profits were seldom as low as ten per cent, often as high as twenty-five and might safely be averaged at seventeen and a half. The profits of the jobber might be estimated at the same, or perhaps a greater percent, because he had to include the loss to which he must submit, in converting paper to available funds.

In Charleston the country merchant dealt directly with the importer, who combined in his business all that was done in New York by both importer and jobber; his profits might be said to average from twenty to thirty-three per cent more than either of them singly, but probably not more, if as much, as both combined. They had two establishments, and each probably his family to support, he only one. But admitting that generally, goods might be purchased lower at New York, yet there were other items of calculations to be taken into acount. The country merchant was supposed to make his own selections in person—it would cost him considerably more, and take a longer time both for him to go and return and for his goods to be brought from New York—the interest which accrued on his money while idle—the risks, insurance and cost of shipping to and landing at Charleston, and commissions in forwarding to him. These were the elements of price which enhanced the cost of the goods. By way of illustration the following comparative facts were furnished by experienced Southern merchants:

In New York

Cost of goods, duty off	$100.00
Duty paid by importer	23.50
	123.50
Profits of importer, 17½ per cent	21.61
Sold to jobber for	145.11
Profits of jobber at 20 per cent	29.02
Sold to Southern merchant	174.13
Freight to Charleston, expense, insurance, loss on exchange, etc., at 5 per cent	8.70
The cost of the goods to merchant landed in Charleston	$182.83

In Charleston

Cost, duty off	$100.00
Add duty paid by importer	23.50
	123.50
Profits, including interest for six months and all charges at 33 per cent	41.17
Sold to country merchant for	$164.67
Saved to Southern merchant by purchase in Charleston, exclusive of expenses of traveling to the North	18.16
	$182.83

New York possessed an advantage in one respect—state and corporation taxation, port expenses, wharf fees, landings, etc., were considerably less than what some of the Southern states and cities imposed. The taxes fell upon the sales only, were light, and were paid by the purchaser in fact. In the South port expenses were greater, the states imposed considerable taxes on stock in trade, while some of the cities aspiring to import trade, strangely discouraged it by collecting a tax on every dollar's sale of merchandise made within their corporate limits. Such taxation was in its nature repugnant and inquisitorial to merchants' feelings.

For want of packets and shipping much of the import trade of Charleston was made by her own merchants through New York; the goods were bought by them in Europe, shipped in New York packets to New York, unloaded there and re-shipped to Charleston; in all such cases there were increased expenses of commissions, insurance and freight on the voyage, and delay which was still more injurious; the goods therefore cost the importer more than similar goods direct to Charleston, but still were cheaper than he could buy them in New York. Another and important consideration was the credit which could be had in the two places. The credits given to the country merchant in New York would average from six to eight months while in Charleston they averaged from nine to ten, sometimes twelve months. Then the medium of payments in New York was by bank notes at a discount, or exchange at a premium. In Charleston most of the Southern notes were taken at par, constituting a saving of from one to three percent.

After weighing all statements and arguments submitted to the committee they came decidedly to the opinion that foreign goods might be imported into and sold at Southern ports as cheaply and upon as good terms as in the North, and perhaps it was not going too far to say, upon better—and in this opinion the best informed merchants of the South agreed. During the last season they had made more importations, acting in accordance with this belief, than in the past twenty years, and upon more favorable terms than the New York market could afford. One experienced South Carolina merchant who imported direct from Europe, testified that he paid twenty-five dollars for a negro blanket for which New York demanded thirty-three. A firm in the city of Charleston imported a case of cassimeres direct and one from New York. The latter cost thirty per cent higher than the imported case. Others testified that one could save about fifteen to twenty per cent by the direct route.

Regarding supplies of merchandise in Southern seaports it was stated that Charleston contained excellent assortments of foreign goods though domestic commodities were not as varied or as good as in the North. The great market of New York afforded more range of selection at all times, but these might not always be more suited or of better staple than the Southern supply. Local merchants were more familiar with the needs and desires of their Southern customers and were therefore more capable of selecting suitable stocks. During the current season rates had been better than could be obtained in the North and business had been increasing, rising at the rate of twenty-five per cent over the year preceding.[2] Many intelligent and enterprising dealers from the interior

[2] Northern merchants had admitted that the Southern spring trade

towns, villages and country, who formerly traded in New York, had made their purchases in Charleston, and others who had bought in New York, had later regretted the loss of time and money spent in going North. Greater activity had pervaded the South Carolina market while New York, which generally got a bulk of Southern trade had witnessed a comparative stagnation. One company which had a house both in Charleston and New York sold on the capital employed the past year full seventy-five per cent more goods in the former than in the latter city. Others had gone to New York and when they investigated at Charleston saw the light. This was gratifying evidence that trade was falling back into its ancient channels, and again returning to fertilize and repeople its former homes.

It was thus shown by the committee that at Charleston the assortments of supplies were good, and ample, the terms fair, and the credits favorable. There were parts of the retailer's supplies which he could get nowhere so well as at the Southern seaports—West India groceries for instance. By purchasing the other goods necessary for his business at the same market he simplified his business, contracted it to a single point nearer to him, where he could avail himself of more means to meet payments. Another advantage resulted from it. His customers would buy more freely when his goods were fresh and he need buy no more than would meet a ready sale, for being near his market, he could in a very short time get more goods of a given kind if necessary. He thus made a smaller capital do a larger business, and ran little risk of sustaining losses by goods growing old on his hands and going out of fashion.

The South must keep her own trade, accumulate capital, and ere long she would witness far-reaching benefits—vast power and influence—a strong guarantee for the stability of her institutions. The certain profits in Southern trade must be advertised so that capitalists from all parts of the world would want to locate in the South through partnerships, agencies, or loans. The realization of these hopes would bring more and better markets, more favorable prices, improved credit, larger stocks, and a wider range of goods. With an increase in wealth would come further development in the resources and industries to the benefit of all classes. In short economic happiness and prosperity would prevail.

In this rather mellifluous manner the report of the committee of ten came to its conclusion, but not without ensuing discussion in which the Messrs. Elmore, Preston, Longstreet,

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of 1839 was excedingly light and attributed it to difficulties with Southern banks and the scarcity of exchange goods. (New York Herald, May 4, 1839.)

Stephens, and others participated. The delegates generally agreed and in order to carry into effect the advice of the three committee reports the convention resolved to do several things.

First, To extend and enlarge the commercial capital and credit of the Southern States to enable merchants to carry on the business of direct importations on an extensive scale, and on the most advantageous terms.

Second, To direct a portion of the capital now absorbed in other pursuits to the field of commerce with a reasonable assurance that such investments would be profitable to individuals and beneficial to the community.[3]

Third, To recommend banks to extend aid to this trade so as to afford the necessary facilities for carrying it on successfully, by enlarging the capital and extending the credit of those who may engage in it.

Fourth, To encourage foreigners to bring in capital and credit, in aid of the resources of the country and for this purpose to send abroad suitable agents to induce foreign capitalists and merchants to establish agencies and form co-partnerships in Southern cities, with the assurance of receiving cordial welcome and zealous support.

Fifth, To advise the merchants and capitalists of the South to cooperate with those of Europe for the purpose of immediately establishing lines of packets and steamers, whereby regular communication at stated periods might be secured, and to adopt proper measures necessary to attain this goal.

Sixth, to create a demand in Southern ports for all goods directly imported, by opening free communication with the interior, through an extensive system of railroads, canals, and turnpikes to enable the merchants of the interior to procure their supplies on the best terms possible.

Seventh, To adopt proper means for introducing commercial education among the youth of the South to train them up to habits of business and thereby establish a body of merchants, whose interests and feelings should be identified with the country which had reared and sustained them.

Finally, To revive the "Southern Review" and dedicate it to the defence and development of Southern institutions.

It was decided to have committees attend meetings of the state legislatures to urge upon them the necessity of promoting the foregoing resolutions. Other committees were formed, charged to call meetings in several districts in the Southern states and recommend citizens to invest portions of their surplus capital in limited partnerships with merchants in the trading cities and towns of their respective states.

[3] Several states had passed laws in support of this resolution, authorizing the formation of limited co-partnerships.

After the close of the business session, Colonel Arthur P. Hayne delivered an animated address in which he showed the good already done by previous conventions, demonstrated their tendency to unite the South socially and commercially and above all, on that great "issue on which hangs the welfare of the South and the harmony and duration of the Union."

Following the precedent set by Augusta, the citizens of Charleston gave a dinner abundantly furnished with excellent viands and exquisite wines to the delegates of the convention, and as usual there was the gushing eloquence abounding in sparkling wit and humor. The general sentiment seemed to be spontaneously Southern but deliberately patriotic. William C. Preston advocating Southern commercial independence urged only an honorable rivalry, not a war, with the enterprising North, and another diner offered a toast to the merchant patriots of the Revolution—John Hancock and Henry Laurens. There were responses from other states, and among the speakers were Alexander Stephens, of Georgia and Robert Y. Hayne, the famous South Carolina orator.

A salute drunk to Great Britain was responded to by the English Consul, William Oilby: "To the Southern states, may the value of their imports soon be as a just proportion to that of their exports." Further international toasts were offered to France, to the Emperor of Russia, and to Prussia, but the latter three were apparently not represented at the banquet. Then they drank to free trade, the great cause of the whole South. To the banks—may they continue specie payments forever. To the Northern states—"our rivals and our foes, let us emulate their noble example of industry and enterprise." To Chancellor Harper, for his eminent abilities, profound political opinion, and devotion to the interests and institutions of the South. To steamboats and railroads—may they increase from Maine to Texas, tend to do away with unjust prejudices and perpetuate forever the glorious Union, (this one was by a Northern guest). To the great Southern States,—United we stand, divided we fall. To the ladies of

Charleston. "Our Love for Our Country—the heart of the Southern man expands over the whole length and breadth of our land—but where is the obligation to love our neighbors more than ourselves? Why should others reap where we sow?" "Finally, to the Commercial Convention—a full and free and undisguised expression of Southern feelings and opinion, regardless of foreign interpretation."[4]

A few days after the convention adjourned the Charleston Courier received a letter from a former Northerner then a resident of Charleston, concerning the frequent economic agitation in the South. He had recently heard much talk about Yankees carrying on all the commerce of the country, that its profits were being pocketed by them; and that the enterprising Yankee capitalists would go through fire and water to make money and live like nabobs. So the writer wished, by way of addition, to remind the readers that the Augusta and Hamburg Railroad too, was helped forward by Yankees; that the head of the company was not a native of the cotton country. and that many great Western railroads had been and were being advanced by Yankees. Furthermore, five-sixths of the merchants in Charleston and many other Southern cities were Yankees or persons of foreign birth. And, in fact, the recent conventions intended to bring profit to Southern commerce would certainly help the Yankee class of the communities if they could help anybody. However, Northern business men were not as covetous as they were sometimes pictured, and then the writer pleaded for good will toward the brethren of the cooler states.

A well-favored prophecy followed from the same writer. The South was quite right in wanting to take care of its own concerns and in making her commerce independent of the North; and, he ventured to say that the South was destined to be a great manufacturing country some day, since she was particularly suited for such work. Slaves would be employed as the operatives in the factories because they were less bothered by politics than were "free" workers, they

[4] Charleston Courier, April 11, 1839.

were sufficiently advanced in intelligence to carry on the labors, and opulence was in the offing for their owners as well as for the community. Goods would be manufactured for domestic consumption primarily while the surplus raw material would sustain a direct trade with foreign markets, and in this way, South Carolina, for example, would within ten or fifteen years become a powerful commercial and manufacturing state as well as an agricultural paradise. Besides, the South had to be commercially independent of the North for another reason. The North or a portion of it—a large portion of it—was hostile to Southern institutions, and it was the duty of loyal citizens to defend these peculiar institutions by all the means which God and nature had put into their hands. Once the hostile Yankees found out the South was in earnest and that she had established an independent position they would change their attitude and policy, and slavery and free trade would live in eternal happiness.[5]

Another interesting comment came from a planter's pen in the form of an article on the prospects and policy of the South.[6] The planters, the writer confessed, were the most important class in the South. They furnished her wealth, the sources of her commerce, and the basis of the whole foreign trade of the country. They formed a unique society distinct from any other known in the civilized world. It was a fond delusion to attempt to compare themselves with others and a fatal mistake to imitate their commercialized neighbors and contemporaries. Entertaining these opinions it was surprising to see so many planters constituting so large a body of the commercial conventions. What possible interest could a planter, as such, have in any of the measures likely to be brought before such a convention? In the words of the writer, "If, as is not unlikely, the name is merely a nom de guerre, and that these are political conventions, the case is different. But that a planter should gravely sit among real merchants and manufacturers for the purpose of provid-

[5] Ibid., April 22, 1839.
[6] Southern Quarterly Review, XXVI, 431.

ing for the prosperity of the whole, is to make an exhibition of the most wonderful abnegation of self at which the world ever stood astonished. Let every Southern man solemnly decide for himself whether our civilization is worth preserving; if he is satisfied with it, then let him act on the defensive, and resist the efforts of those who, dazzled by the splendors of Northern civilization, would endeavor to imitate it." A moneyed civilization and the planter class of leisure could not abide together—one or the other had to perish.

The writer went on to tell how commercial rivalry between the North and South had arisen along with the political; how the Southerner had once been powerful and wealthy, living in pomp and luxury; how parvenus from the North had begun to usurp the throne of wealth and pretended to rival the South in refinement and elegance; and how before long the Southerners found themselves bending before the monarch of the North who would despotically prostrate his subjects.

This altered situation led to inquiries which assigned every supposable cause for Southern misery. A favorite cause was, the unequal operation of the laws; another was the tariff. In time the latter abomination was modified but the South continued to degenerate, Northern wealth rapidly increasing, Southern daily diminishing. Now the question was again being agitated and discussed. This time investigations revealed commerce as the cause of the disparity of the sections, and commerce was accordingly the panacea prescribed. The whole South was stirred and conventions were held for the purpose of promoting Southern commerce.

What if the North had prospered by her commerce? The planter was not interested in that. His object was to sell his produce at the highest price and purchase his supplies at the lowest. He was opposed to commercial prosperity of the South or of any portion of it. Facilities for communication were quite satisfactory as they were and internal improvements were of no advantage either to cities or to the rural population; in fact, he preferred wagons to railroads

as being more dependable and convenient. Agriculture was the basis of Southern society and the only thing worth while developing or improving; the proper occupation of capital in these states was the raising of staple crops; any other diversion of it was a waste of time and money, therefore unwise and generally unsuccessful. Commerce was for the cities—crowded unhealthful communities; the South preferred the country life, a perfect estate, independent, self sustaining and proud. The commercial interests were supreme in the North; agriculture must be dominant in the South.

Commercial control in the South was a menace to the Southern planters and hence to the peculiar Southern civilization.

> To our view it is clear that if the dreams of the Southern commercial conventions should ever be realized the planter society would perish at once. Nothing maintains slavery but the influence extended upon it by the dominant class at the South. It is right because the ruling class declare it to be right. In other parts of the world it is wrong because the fashion of society denounces it. Let the planter class feel itself inferior to the merchant and the manufacturer and it will no longer dare to defend an institution condemned by them. Every city is destined to be the seat of free-soilism. It is unconsciously making its appearance in Charleston, and it is destined to increase with every fresh arrival of European immigrants. Whites are driving our slaves from their old employments all fostered by the cities.

They must choose between commerce and agriculture, cities and plantations, free labor and slavery. Should the dreams of the conventions be realized the peculiar institution of the South would be doomed. However, in conclusion, the writer expressed his willingness to resign to fate if it had to be so.

This was apparently not the point of view of all planters, for at the Southern planters' convention held in Macon, Georgia, October 1839, there was unanimous approval of Southern commercial development. They appreciated the importance of direct intercourse between Europe and Southern ports and declared that no remedy for the evils of the cotton situation could be complete so long as imports came through and were controlled by the North and by Great

Britain. Planters were recommended to cooperate in establishing and sustaining direct houses in Southern cities connected with merchants in Holland and other parts of Europe. As a manifestation of their earnestness in desiring the commercial independence of the South it was decided to ship a portion of their crops, one-tenth, or one-twentieth, or any amount that would be convenient, immediately and directly to some foreign port.[7]

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[7] De Bow's Review, XI, 683.

CHAPTER III

The Calhoun Convention

Four attempts had now been made to establish the commercial independence of the Southern States and though the last effort at Charleston had been a stupendous affair full of promise and elaborate resolves the movement came to a fruitless, though not a permanent, close. Six years later (1845), when railroad building and general improvement projects monopolized the minds of most Americans and when the West was assuming great importance in matters of state, some enterprising men of the South decided to resurrect the erstwhile movement for Southern material progress. The coming convention was to be less sectional than those of the thirties and would have as its object an alliance with the growing West; to unite the Valley of the Mississippi with the Southern States socially, economically, and politically, by railroads, canals, and common markets.

This second manifestation of the cotton country in the endeavor to throw off her economic shackles came to life in the following way. In March 1845 Captain Bingham, of Arkansas, arrived in Memphis, bearing a mission about a military road to the Indian frontier. A public meeting was called and a committee appointed by it charged with the subject. Dr. Shanks from the committee reported and suggested a convention to advocate general plans for internal improvements in the Southwest. Such a meeting was accordingly held in Memphis, on the Fourth of July,[1] but from the haste in which it was assembled, and the limited extent of the country it embraced, it was so thinly attended that the body was adjourned over to the twelfth of November, when a larger representation of all the interests might be obtained. Previous to adjournment various committees were appointed, addresses published and invitations extended.[2] At the next meeting final action was to be taken upon the following subjects:

[1] Memphis Daily Eagle, July 9, 1845. [2] DeBow's Review, I, 9.

1. The Military and Naval resources of the Mississippi Valley, and its ability to create and sustain a Steam Military Marine.
2. The Improvement of the Ohio River; the subject of a free canal at the Falls of the Ohio.
3. The Improvement of the Mississippi River and its Tributaries.
4. A Western National Armory.
5. A National Ship Canal to connect the Mississippi with the Northern Lakes.
6. Mail Routes on the Western Rivers.
7. A Military Road through the Public Lands in the Southwest.
8. Reclaiming the submerged grounds along the margin of the Western Rivers.
9. The Growth of Cotton and Improvement of Agriculture.
10. Manufacturing in the South.
11. The Completion of the Railroad from Charleston to Memphis.

The last three topics, being of a rather local nature, were not to be urged upon the attention of the general government.[3]

In addition to the above a few other more detailed matters were recommended for discussion at the Memphis convention. A bakery, it was thought, should be erected at Chicago, to supply the American Navy with bread, so that if the Atlantic coast should be blockaded by an enemy, the Gulf fleet would be enabled to get its provisions uninterruptedly. A school for naval engineers should be established at Memphis, and mail and snag boats on the Western rivers, to be used to train crews in the arts of war and to serve the public weal in times of peace. This proposed river fleet and school of engineers properly constructed and maintained would, it was thought, "constitute at once a nursery and a nucleus, by means of which the steam power of the Valley might be expanded, in case of war, into the most formidable force that had ever been commissioned by man, to roam the sea, burn, sink and destroy." It was hoped that the subject of direct trade for the South would be discussed and that the convention would urge the adoption of the Warehousing System as a remedy against the oppressive tariff and custom house exactions; and that the Federal Government would be recommended to consider the deepening of the New Orleans Bar and the establishment of

[3] Southern Literary Messenger, XI, 577.

lighthouses on the Florida and Gulf coasts.[4] According to the circular of invitation the convention was studiously to avoid everything tending to excite or inflame party sympathies and action of the national authorities would be sought and urged only in cases where there was an entire unanimity of sentiment as to the powers conferred upon the general government.[5]

In an article addressed to the Memphis convention, Lieutenant M. F. Maury, of the United States Navy, pointed out that the states on the Gulf and South Atlantic coasts were more open to aggression and attack by an enemy than any other section of the Union and were therefore in greater need of national defence; the immense commercial resources, their agricultural prosperity, their wealth and future destiny demanded more protection than they had heretofore received. The grasping and wily North had been the favorite son of the paternal government, while the South had been put off with a mere rattler; and yet the latter supplied two-thirds of American commerce. More money had been expended in fortifying and protecting the port of Norfolk than for Pensacola, Mobile, and all the Gulf Coast and harbors put together, and yet, in a commercial way Norfolk was no better than the little town of Memphis. As a result of this partizan policy of the Federal Government the coast and commerce of the South and West remained in a defenseless and vulnerable state, and in case of war the Gulf trade would be seriously annoyed.

> Do the people who send to market, through the Gulf, bear sufficiently in mind the fact, that for years past, they have contributed largely of their substance, in building up a system of harbor and naval defence at the North, almost to the entire neglect of their own? Are they aware that they have lent their aid in fortifying the coast from Norfolk up, at the average rate of a gun for every three hundred and eighty yards, while their own coasts at the South can only count one to the three thousand yards?

What the South needed was a proper system of national defence, a strong, first-class naval station and a boat yard on the Mississippi, preferably at Memphis, where a steam navy

[4] Ibid., XI, 380 ff.

[5] Niles' Register, LXIX, 100.

would be ready at short notice to rush down to the defense of the Gulf coast.[6]

The newspapers of the South hoped for and expected results beneficial to their section as well as to the whole Union, and to help the representatives realize success in their endeavors they contributed much sound advice, often stressing the fact that action was more efficacious than oratory. In order to turn the current of popular ambition into useful channels, instead of wasting energy in idle scrambles of politics and would-be president making, the convention should induce the people to go to work practically to build up a nation's good and not lose time in abstractions and petty squabbles. The delegates should not come together to listen to long, tiresome reports about elaborate schemes and to empty and self-laudatory eloquence, but should follow the example of the effective Bostonians, who accomplished things by simple and pithy procedure.[7]

Not only encouraging advice was given but there were also discussions and comments more or less adverse, some papers viewing the convention with apprehension and considerable anxiety.[8] When it was first suggested, there were many who seriously questioned the propriety of its assemblage, fearing it would terminate in a vast political machine; that it was a nefarious scheme concocted in the South and West aimed at the destruction of the great Republic and the ultimate creation of a Western empire. This was believed by people in different parts of the country, but there were more expressions less alarming, yet critical and pessimistic in tone. To bring together men from more than half of the American Union to deliberate upon interests not generally conceived national was not only narrow sectionalism but dangerous to the welfare of the country. Again, such a mixed body of men could not talk long on railroads, canals, river navigation, and commerce without coming to verbal blows, at least, on matters of free trade and tariff, president making and general electioneering. As

[6] Southern Literary Messenger, XI, 650.
[7] Niles' Register, LXIX, 161.
[8] Memphis Daily Eagle, November 4, 1845.

a matter of fact, when the convention did meet and an individual, apparently to determine the degree of discontent, proposed that the time had come for the removal of the seat of government west of the Allegheny Mountains he was rebuked by a unanimous vote of disapproval.[9] To further allay the fears of the alarmists and to their disappointment it was declared early in the meeting that such conventions were necessary because of a disposition in the general government to neglect the interests of the South and West; that they gathered for the purpose of making better known their conditions and wants; that there was no desire on their part to engender sectional prejudice or to alienate any portion of the country; finally, that they regarded the North and South, the East and West as One People, united in sympathy and interest into one closely connected and indissoluble Union.[10]

The actual design of the meeting was to consider and adopt measures for more closely uniting the South and West to each other by various links of internal improvements. It is true such a matter involved political questions of the day, and so the public was naturally curious as to what would be the tone of the State Rights party in reference to the proceedings.[11] Opinion as to the need of internal improvements and that Congress should act in the matter was generally unanimous but few told how far it might go in executing its purpose.

One editor described the meeting at Memphis as a grand and sublime spectacle exemplifying the most beautiful aspects of the principles of government where people would think and speak for themselves in a spirit of reason, truth, justice and patriotism.[12] Another wrote that the gathering would be the rarest and most important event since the adoption of the Federal Constitution.[13] The Boston Courier trusted the patriotism of the Memphis assembly and saw in the meeting only an eminent endeavor on the part of the South to awaken public attention to the importance and necessity of internal

[9] DeBow's Review, I, 9. Niles' Register, LXVIII, 312.
[10] DeBow's Review, I, 8.
[11] New York Tribune, November 24, 26, 1845.
[12] Southern Literary Messenger, XI, 577.
[13] DeBow's Review, I, 7.

improvements, and wished the convention all manner of success.[14] Another Northern paper expected it to be one of the largest assemblies which had ever taken place in this country. Some of the most distinguished and influential merchants and citizens were to be at Memphis, and if important results did not accrue from the meeting it would not be the fault of the people.[15]

In Tennessee both Houses of the General Assembly met together, appointed a delegation of ten members of their own body to attend the convention, and also unanimously adopted a resolution inviting John C. Calhoun and Henry Clay to be present.[16] The latter did not accept, but the great Southern leader, though apparently an uncompromising opponent of internal improvements by the government and though quite reluctant at first, was finally persuaded to go, after much coaxing by some of his friends. South Carolina was not very much interested in the movement and James Gadsden, who was to play a prominent part at Memphis, wrote to Calhoun complaining of the fact that so many of their delegates had dropped out, and pointed out the political importance of the convention.

> This is not the time for a strong and leading man to falter. The occasion is propitious for a happy revolution, for the formation of new parties—or rather the bringing back of democracy to its simplicity and honesty. Now is the time to meet our Western friends at Memphis, to set the ball in motion which must bring the Valley to the South, and let them feel as allies of the great commercial and agricultural interests instead of the tax gathering and monopolizing interests of the North.[17]

F. H. Elmore also urged Calhoun to attend the convention, telling him it would be a great opportunity to advance Southern interests as well as his own (Calhoun's); that he had been secluded too long and that here was an occasion for him to come before the people again. The work itself, aside from political consideration, would be of greatest moment and

[14] Quoted in The Memphis Daily Eagle, December 8, 1845.
[15] New York Tribune, November 17, 1845.
[16] Savannah Daily Republican, November 17, 1845.
[17] J. C. Calhoun, Correspondence, p. 1060.

should result in much good to South Carolina. A railroad from Memphis to Charleston running through the territory of non-slave holders would bring these in closer union with the planters and so indissolubly join the interests of the poor white and the small farmer with that of the nobility. And trade would be greatly developed to the benefit of the section and the country.[18] Calhoun had not yet abandoned hope of becoming president, and doubtless perceiving in the forthcoming convention an opportunity to learn something of the temper of the West and Southwest accepted the appointment as delegate at large from South Carolina. On his route to Memphis he was received with marked distinction by the municipal authorities and citizens of Mobile, New Orleans, and other places.[19]

The convention now assumed greater importance and the public looked with much interest to this body not only because of the magnitude of the subjects to be discussed, but also because men of such prominence and intelligence were to participate in its doings.[20] Some were of the opinion that as a result of this meeting Congress would undertake to effect extensive internal improvements and that the convention itself would form a decisive starting point from which would begin a new system of national policies by which the great West would be the dominant power of the Union.[21]

At the appointed time nearly six hundred delegates assembled at Memphis, coming from seventeen states representing various sections and localities. Tennessee sent two hundred and thirty-five; Mississippi, one hundred and seventy; Missouri, thirty-four; Alabama, twenty-two; Illinois, twenty-one; Kentucky, twenty; Louisiana, sixteen; Arkansas, fourteen; South Carolina, eight; Indiana, seven; Virginia, five; Iowa, four; Pennsylvania and Texas three each, and North Carolina, one. It was a respectable and dignified body of men, rather mixed and heterogeneous, including Whigs, Democrats,

[18] Ibid., p. 1062.
[19] Memphis Daily Eagle, November 13, 21, 1845.
[20] Washington Semi-Weekly Union, November 20, 1845.
[21] Baltimore American, November 10, 13, 1845.

merchants, planters, lawyers and others drawn from the political, commercial and learned professions.[22]

John C. Calhoun was elected president of the meeting and the following were chosen to be vice-presidents: Dr. J. Overton, of Tennessee; Col. John Hanna, of Kentucky; Col. W. Strong, of Arkansas; Gen. Roger Barton, of Mississippi; Capt. H. H. Shreve, of Missouri; Hon. O. T. Morgan, of Louisiana; Major A. Black, of South Carolina; Gen. L. White, of Illinois; Dr. H. Snead, of North Carolina; J. L. Hawkins, of Ohio; Hon. W. Burch, of Indiana; Gen. A. C. Dodge, of Iowa; B. B. Minor, of Virginia; and Gen. Edmund P. Gaines, of Louisiana.

The secretaries were: C. T. M. Noland, of Arkansas; J. G. Harris, of Tennessee; A. B. Chambers, of Missouri; A. V. S. Lindsley, of Tennessee; J. D. B. DeBow, of South Carolina; F. A. Lumsden, of Louisiana; and T. B. Drinker, of Ohio. There were three marshals: Gen. J. F. Farrington, Lewis C. Trezevant, and W. B. Morris. The editorial corps of the West and South were fully represented, including some of the leading journalists of each state.[23] One editor wrote:

> The array of talent and influence which was concentrated on the twelfth of November at Memphis, was sufficient to make that convention beyond doubt one of the most imposing assemblages of the kind that this country has witnessed. Men of all parties, and in most cases, it is probable without regard to political parties, were selected as delegates on the occasion, and public attention was directed with no little interest to ascertain the results of the convocation.[24]

Calhoun in his opening address, on taking the chair, expressed the hope that no one would touch upon mooted questions or attempt to arouse political prejudices, and then proceeded to point out the objects and functions of the convention. To develop the resources of the South and West was the reason for the meeting and anything that tended toward progress and improvement of those sections would meet with his hearty cooperation. It was to be determined how and by what means

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[22] Southern Quarterly Review, IX, 249.
[23] Niles' Register, LXIX, 212.
[24] Ibid., LXIX, 196.

these states could best be developed, and also, how far the aid of the general government might be invoked for that purpose, and he then set forth his own opinion on the matter.

The region occupied by the Western and Southern states, said Mr. Calhoun, might be properly divided into three vast and fertile agricultural districts: First, the Mississippi Valley extending nearly through the temperate zone from north to south, and from the Rocky to the Allegheny Mountains; second, the cotton, rice, and tobacco area; and third, the region extending from the Mississippi River along the Gulf to the Mexican line. In these states Nature was most munificent; but there arose the problem of the distribution of this abundant wealth in proper markets, the need of controlling those markets, and military and naval safeguards to protect the necessary transportations. An intelligent and enterprising system of internal improvements was essential to the development of the resources and to the transportation of these bountiful products. But who, asked the speaker, should be the agency for such undertakings. As a general principle he was opposed to granting the Federal Government the power to conduct internal improvements, because such privileges usually resulted in abuse and petty jealousies. But, in relation to the great highway of Western commerce—the Mississippi and its tributaries—which in reality was a great "inland sea" of the country—he did not for a moment question the right of the government to protect, defend, and improve it, just as she had the right to conduct these operations on the Atlantic seaboard, on the Gulf, the Chesapeake and Delaware Bays and the Lakes. It was a beautiful feature of the National Government that what individual enterprise could effect alone would be left to the individual; that Congress undertook only that which could be done most efficiently by itself and left to state or individual work that the latter could do best. And what a state and individual could do together was left to the joint action of the state and individuals, but what neither of these, separately or conjoined were able to accomplish, that and that only was the province of the Federal

Government. And the case of the Mississippi River and its navigable branches fell in the last category.

The inland sea having been improved, the next fundamental need was the connection of the Valley with the Southern Atlantic cities to provide an efficient and rapid transit for the products of the West; a more uninterrupted communication between the Mississippi River and the Gulf by deepening the bar at Balize; and the establishment of a first class naval station at Pensacola, on the Gulf, with permanent occupation by a large naval force, and the speedy fortification of the Tortugas to command the passes between the Gulf and the Atlantic coast.

The coasting voyage round the shores of the Gulf of Mexico, said Mr. Calhoun, was not only inadequate for times of peace but would be so insecure in case of war as to produce the stoppage of an important artery of the commercial system. The Florida Keys were fraught with danger to the mariner and there was the great impediment of distance to overcome. Railroads were the only solution to this problem. Charleston had to be connected not only with Memphis but also with New Orleans, and finally, a complete network of Southern railroads all uniting in a centrally located point was needed. Mindful of other interests, Calhoun then advocated the construction of a canal connecting the Mississippi Valley with the Lakes and the St. Lawrence.

Only the inland sea improvement constitutionally demanded aid from the government but railroad and canal enterprises might receive indirect assistance. The speaker hoped that the government would not remain a land proprietor permanently, but while it was such, the granting of sections of unoccupied land to the roads was not trespassing State Rights principles, as long as the lands were thereby enhanced in value. Another great help to railroad building would be rendered if the duties on iron were repealed; in fact, such a bounty would be like contributing two or three thousand dollars per mile.

In conclusion, Mr. Calhoun dwelt upon the rare advantages possessed by the region of the South and West, their fertility, their diversity of climate, their productions and their geo-

graphic extent; their brilliant destiny. He predicted how twenty years later the West would be engaged in connecting the Mississippi Valley with the Pacific as it then was with the Atlantic and that the connection would be as close with one as with the other, and finally the commerce of both would be commanded and the great Valley would become the center of trade for the whole world.[25]

Calhoun's speech lasted about an hour and was several times interrupted; once by the removal of an obstreperous drunken man but more often by cheers and great applause. An allusion to Texas as a brightly shining star in the national galaxy brought forth vociferous cheers, but the greatest outburst of approbation was produced when the noble Southern statesman conferred the remarkable and unexpected designation of "inland sea" upon the favorite and esteemed father of rivers, and thereby authorized national aid. To beatify the Mississippi Valley under Federal auspices was what drew the West to the convention; hence the almost unanimous applause.[26]

The delegates had come well equipped with a copious supply of words with which to promulgate their cherished designs and with characteristic penchants to press upon the more or less sympathetic audience. Fortunately, Calhoun was chosen chairman, and by bringing to bear the great weight and influence of his character and experience he was able to avert excessive eloquence and to prevent pork barrel schemes from hogging the convention. In spite of the chairman's competence, many of the infinite intentions and propositions were submitted. Those who were interested in the navigation of Western rivers were urgent in pressing the claims of each stream—the Tennessee, the Illinois, the Osage, the Ohio, the Red River, as well as the father of rivers itself, with all their shoals and obstructions, their bars and snags. All those occupied a place in the great schedule of contemplated Western appropriation and improvement. According to one ardent observer, "There were those who would have fain played their

[25] Calhoun's Works, VI, 273. Memphis Daily Eagle, November 20, 1845.

[26] Niles' Register, LXIX, 212.

oratory upon the rippling stream, which almost noiselessly wends its course by the side of their native village." The youngest offspring of the father of rivers claimed a heritable right to the spoils and therefore Federal care.[27] The projects were manifold and vast: the navigation of streams and rivers were provided for, their maritime defenses; their banks and levees came next in order; then dry docks, armories, navy yards for the rivers, military roads and fortifications, frontier defenses and numerous other equally important matters—innumerable subjects which newspapers in every part of the country had been suggesting for a month before that the convention would naturally consider. An available arrangement was finally reclaimed from the chaotic mass of material, action was concentrated on such subjects as would be of widespread interest, and all enterprises that were only of local importance were declared to be inappropriate. In answer to an invocation for good-will the spirit of compromise hovered over and pervaded the great assemblage.

The first day was passed in hearing reports from the several committees appointed at the July convention, and a resolution was adopted allowing the state and territories represented, including Texas, a perfect equality of voting in all the important proceedings of the body.[28] The following were the committees, with their respective chairmen and the different subjects with which they were charged:

Committee on the Military and Naval Resources and Necessities of the South and West—Roger Barton, of Mississippi.

On Improvements of the Ohio River—Thomas J. Bingham, of Pennsylvania.

Improvements of the Western Rivers—A. B. Chambers, of Missouri.

Forts and Defences and Indian Frontier West—A. G. Meyers, Arkansas.

Western Mails—M. B. Winchester, Tennessee.

Manufactures in the South—A. D. Parks, of Tennessee.

Western Marine Hospitals—Dr. W. Christian, Memphis.

Leveeing and Reclaiming the Public Lowlands on the Borders of the large Western Rivers—D. Craighead, Tennessee.

Connection of the Lakes with Western Rivers by Ship Canal—W. Walters, Illinois.

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[27] DeBow's Review, I, 10.

[28] Memphis Daily Eagle, November 14, 1845.

Railroad Connection of Southern Atlantic Ports with the Mississippi River—Robertson Topp, Tennessee.
A Western Armory—Henry Eddy, Illinois.
Military Road through Arkansas—D. H. Bingham, Pennsylvania.
Agriculture—J. Pope, Tennessee.
Lakes, Harbors and Defenses—J. F. Briggs, Ohio.
Warehousing System—B. B. Minor, Virginia.[29]

These committees were suggested for the most part by the respective delegations, and comprised, in general, practical and capable business men. Colonel Gadsden from the committee on railroads presented for inspection a map of various routes from the Mississippi eastward and another showing every railroad proposed. A motion to appoint a committee on the Cumberland Road was withdrawn after objection by C. C. Clay, of Alabama. Debate followed the introduction of schemes for a military road from Vandalia, Illinois, to Texas and another through Arkansas. The former was passed over, the latter referred to a committee.[30] The matter of the Warehousing System was brought up but fear of dissension already increased by the Arkansas road caused it to be laid on the table. This question, it was believed, related more to the mercantile than to the agricultural interests, aroused political controversy, and was therefore deemed an inappropriate subject to be pressed upon the assembly. The other committees presented their respective reports.[31]

A gentleman from Illinois took issue with some of Calhoun's remarks in his opening address, making particular strictures on the chairman's allusion to the great inland sea and to more minor works which had been placed within the legitimate scope of Federal care. In reply, Mr. Calhoun declared that the general government might grant appropriations for local purposes only when the object was national defence, and that the Mississippi and its navigable tributaries were constitutionally entitled to such aid. The same gentleman from Illinois

[29] Ibid., November 15, 1845. Journal of Proceedings Southwestern Convention, Memphis, 1845, pp. 20, 21.
[30] Niles' Register, LXIX, 213. Journal of Proceedings, pp. 29-41.
[31] Ibid.; Agriculture, pp. 44-55; Western Rivers, pp. 56-74; Warehousing System, pp. 96-99; Manufactures, p. 99; Canals, pp. 114-116; Defenses, pp. 117-119.

also offered a resolution that only propositions harmonious to both parties should be recommended to Congress; which resolution was adopted by a large majority. And thereafter a most cordial feeling was evinced, the assembly avoiding anything that might bring on dissension and difference of opinion.[32]

In conformity with this harmonious resolve a general committee was appointed, charged with the preparation and adjustment of all matters offered for the final action of the convention. It consisted of one member from each state: Gov. J. C. Jones, Tennessee; James Guthrie, Kentucky; T. B. Craighead, Arkansas; Col. James Gadsden, South Carolina; W. P. Scates, Illinois; H. T. Reed, Iowa; B. B. Minor, Virginia; T. J. Bingham, Pennsylvania; J. H. Lucas, Missouri; C. C. Clay, Alabama; C. R. Cliffton, Mississippi; Edward Fisher, Ohio; A. T. Ellis, Indiana; R. Sneed, North Carolina.[33] This committee offered a set of resolutions which were adopted almost without debate.[34] They were:

1. The reports of the various committees, presented to the convention, were to be printed, together with necessary documents accompanying them.
2. Safe communication between the Gulf of Mexico and the interior, afforded by the navigation of the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers and their principal tributaries, was declared indispensable to the defense of the country in time of war, and essential also to its commerce.
3. The improvement and preservation of the navigation of those great rivers were objects as strictly national as any other preparation for the defence of the country, and such improvements were deemed by the convention impracticable by the states, or individual enterprise, but called for the appropriation of money by the general government.
4. The deepening of the mouth of the Mississippi, so as to pass ships of the largest class, cost what it may, was a work worthy of the nation, and would greatly promote the general prosperity.
5. If the policy of reinforcing the navy with war steamers was adopted the Western waters should be the proper sources of supply, as they abound in iron, the best material for their construction, and in lead and copper, important materials for munitions of war, provisions also being cheap and the skill requisite for their construction and navigation being ample in this region, which already possessed the largest steam commercial marine in the world.
6. The project of connecting the Mississippi River with the lakes

[32] Niles' Register, LXIX, 213.
[33] Memphis Daily Eagle, November 18, 1845.
[34] DeBow's Review, I, 17.

of the North, by a ship canal, and thus with the Atlantic Ocean, was a measure worthy of the enlightened consideration of Congress.

7. The intercourse between the Gulf of Mexico and the Atlantic coast ought to be preserved unimpaired, and ample military and naval defenses, and additional lighthouses and beacons should be established along the coast of the Gulf of Mexico, and at the most eligible points.

8. The Gulf and Lake coasts were declared to be greater in extent than the Atlantic seaboard; the interests to be defended in one quarter were quite as important and altogether as national as those in the other; therefore the expenditures required for the proper defense of the Gulf and Lakes should be equal to that voted for the coast defenses of the Atlantic.

9. Congress should establish a national armory and foundry at some point on the Western waters, at as early a period as practicable.

10. The marine hospitals on the Western and Southern waters, the construction of which had been commenced or authorized by Congress, ought to be carried to completion with the least practicable delay.

11. The mail service of the West and South required great improvement in speed and regularity, particularly on the Western rivers, and measures ought to be taken for the prompt extension by the government of the magnetic telegraph into or through the Valley of the Mississippi.

12. Millions of acres of the public domain lying on the Mississippi River and its tributaries, now worthless for purposes of cultivation, might be reclaimed by throwing up embankments so as to prevent overflow; and the convention recommended for the purpose a grant of these lands or an appropriation of money.

13. Railroads and communications from the Valley of the Mississippi to the South Atlantic ports would give greater facilities to trade, greater dispatch in traveling, and would develop new resources of wealth. They would be salutary influences on the commercial, social, and political relations of the country, and were recommended as work within the power of private enterprise and as a profitable investment of capital.

14. In order that the earliest opportunity might be afforded for private individuals and enterprise to direct their capital and energies to the completion of the important roads projected, the convention recommended to the delegations present, to appoint committees charged with the duty of prompt and early application to their respective legislatures, for charters to construct such roads as might pass through their states; and to ask such aid and patronage from said states as they, in their discretion, might deem proper and necessary, to aid in the construction of the works.

15. In order that as many of the roads projected might pass through the public domain, the convention urged Congress to consider the equity of granting the right of way and alternate sections, in aid of the works so situated—such grant, in the opinion of the convention, being no more than a fair compensation paid by the proprietor for the enhanced value imparted to the sections of land retained by the Government.

16. The general government ought to take steps to move and prevent the recurrence of the obstacles in the Mississippi, opposite the city of St. Louis, so that the harbor there might at all times be accessible, as these were objects of public utility, of a national character, and entirely beyond the ability of Missouri to accomplish.

17. Congress should make an appropriation of money, for the purpose of completing the military road from the west bank of the Mississippi (opposite Memphis) through the swamps to the highlands in Arkansas, in the direction of the various military posts on the Western frontier.

18. A Dry Dock and convenient arrangement for the repairs and refitting of government vessels should be established at some suitable point on the Gulf of Mexico.

Numbers sixteen and seventeen, relating to the Bar of St. Louis and the Arkansas road, were approved only after a long and exciting discussion, in which the delegates from these sections took conspicuous part. The Alabama delegation wanted improvements for the Mobile harbor but they presented their resolution at a late stage of the meeting and the proposition was laid on the table.[35] The convention also instructed their president to appoint two committees of five members each, one to memorialize Congress on the various topics embraced in the foregoing resolutions and the other to address their common constituents on the same subjects.[36]

In due time and in accordance with their commission, the Committee, consisting of James Gadsden, of South Carolina; J. Guthrie, of Kentucky; Roger Barton, of Mississippi; Leroy Pope, of Tennessee, and J. H. Lucas, of Missouri, prepared a petition to be brought to the attention of the national lawmakers. The memorialists believed there was nothing in the resolutions recommended by the Memphis convention which might not claim the legitimate action of Congress and no new project submitted not worthy of the enlightened consideration of that honorable body. The several plans were then described in detail and each was accompanied by a prolix argument advocating its adoption. The Federal Government had the constitutional power to enact the foregoing propositions, first, as a proprietor of the public domain; second, by virtue of her jurisdiction over trade and commerce, and third, under the obligations to provide for the general defense.[37]

On February 3, 1846, Mr. Holmes, of South Carolina, asked permission to present the Memphis resolutions before

[35] Memphis Daily Eagle, November 18, 1845. Charleston Mercury, November 29, 1845.

[36] Niles' Register, LXIX, 196.

[37] Calhoun's Works, V, 293.

the House of Representatives but their reception was opposed. In the Senate the memorial was more sympathetically received and met its demise in a more leisurely manner. Calhoun, who presented the petition, described it as being drawn up with great ability though he did not approve of all the resolutions. The matter was referred to a select committee of five of which the South Carolina senator was chairman. In preparing the report of this committee, Calhoun took great care and several weeks of hard work. Two primary motives guided the great Southerner in composing the paper—the state rights doctrine must be strictly upheld and the improvement of navigation of the Mississippi must be placed within the constitutional province of the Federal Government.[38]

The report gave an elaborate account of the growth of commerce in the Mississippi Valley, depicted the dangers and drawbacks that the many parts of that section had to contend with, and the annual loss of life and property that resulted from the obstructions of river navigation. It called for the improvement of the main streams, the removal of the serious hazards to trade and life—the snags, logs, and rocks. The committee was then brought to the delicate and important question—Who had the power and the duty to effect all these reforms? And a masterful argument on which Calhoun had put much energy and which he regarded as one of the most effective state rights papers he had ever produced, concluded that it was the duty and power of the Federal Government to regulate commerce on the Mississippi as it was on the Atlantic coast.[39] Each proposition recommended by the Memphis convention was then fully examined, some were rejected, others approved and advocated. Navigation must be rendered more safe and commerce facilitated; harbors for commerce as distinguished from those of shelter or for naval stations were dismissed as unauthorized. The cutting of canals or the construction of roads around shoals, falls or other impediments to the navigation of the Mississippi and its tributaries were also excluded as not within Federal jurisdiction. The com-

[38] Calhoun's Correspondence, pp. 694, 695.
[39] Ibid., p. 705.

mittee was of the opinion that the public land ought to be reclaimed and that Congress ought to adopt measures to dispose of its portion of these lands as soon as possible, that railroads were not embraced in the government's power to regulate commerce but that indirect aid in their construction was permissible in the form of a reduction of duty rates on iron; regarding the canal from the Mississippi to the Lakes it was declared Congress had no constitutional power to construct such a work; finally, they recommended a strong and permanent naval station of the first class at Pensacola, or at some other point on the Gulf, and suitable fortifications for that section.[40] The report was accompanied by a bill authorizing a board of engineers to make a survey of the Mississippi, with a view to the improvements of its navigation, but the bill met with a fatal reception.

Approval of the Memphis convention and its resolutions was by no means unanimous in the South,[41] and some of Calhoun's friends were amazed at and anxious over his unexpected change of attitude, a few persons even daring to censure the great leader for his liberal construction speech.[42] It was generally agreed that all the advocated improvements were of great importance and everyone hoped they would be accomplished. But the question always arose as to who would supply the means, the immense cost indispensable to their completion. Some of the contemplated measures, it was argued, were suitable for Federal and others for state jurisdiction and provision; but at Memphis, of course, all the projects were to be supervised by the national government. If the Federal Government might do all that the resolutions proposed then there was no limit to its power of engaging in internal improvements. If the Mississippi was to be made safe for transit then on what principles of law and justice were the other navigable interior waters to be excluded? Were not all rivers in the Union a part of its national wealth, strength, and defense, and if the rivers of the Mississippi Valley might be

[40] Calhoun's Works, V, 246.
[41] Charleston Mercury, November 29; December 2, 3, 1845.
[42] Ibid., December 10, 1845.

improved at the expense of all the states, why not all rivers of the nation? Many harbors could be made safer and more popular if they were deepened and yet only the Mississippi's mouth was asked to be improved by Congressional aid. It was proposed that Congress should protect the city of St. Louis against a threatened change in the channel of the Mississippi, while other cities equally desirous of assistance were neglected. The other matters entertained by the convention and objected to by many Southerners were the proposed connection of the Mississippi with the Lakes by means of a ship canal; the clearing out of all obstructions from the Mississippi and Ohio rivers and their tributaries; the leveeing or embankment of those rivers; the Arkansas military road; and the extension of telegraph and railroads.[43] All these schemes were declared to be unconstitutional and were dreaded as dangerous doctrine, some editors seeing in this grand paternalism the evidence that the West was assuming control of the Federal Government.[44]

The Southerners, however, did not condemn all the resolutions and were even enthusiastic over some of the propositions which they considered essential for defence and general welfare, and, therefore, within the scope of the power of Congress. The petitions regarded as being national in their aspect were: better intercourse between the Gulf of Mexico and the South Atlantic coast, improvement of the military and naval defenses in that unprotected quarter, better mail service for the South and West, a marine hospital, a national armory and foundry in the West, and a dock yard on the Gulf. Against these measures there was no clamor; in fact, some people complained that in comparison with the North and East, Congress had done little for the South and West. This grievance was, moreover, fortified by a warning that "if Congress does not provide for exigencies so imminent and pressing, the complaints of the South would increase in vehemence and would be disposed to question the respect and love of such a government." [45]

[43] Southern Quarterly Review, IX, 249.
[44] Baltimore American, November 26, 1845. Charleston Mercury, November 29, 1845. Memphis Daily Eagle, December 8, 1845.
[45] Southern Quarterly Review, IX, 250.

The convention was of course a mere deliberative assembly without power to enforce its decisions, and so it could only advertise and petition its grievances to Congress, where they would at least remain as an available record to be referred to by ambitious public servants seeking reelection. Even aside from this rather precarious influence the huge demonstration was not regarded as a wholly unsuccessful one nor were its economic and political effects by any means negligible. Mass meetings can never produce internal improvements but they do sometimes arouse the people; and so this one stirred the South and West toward the building of railroads, for one thing. Charleston and Savannah were to be joined with the valleys of the Mississippi and the Cumberland; Nashville with Chattanooga, Rome and Memphis; Montgomery with Vicksburg, and Natchez with the Grand Gulf.[46] The aim of the politicians at the convention had been to effect an alliance between the South and West, and Calhoun believed that the only barrier to such a union was the improvement of the Mississippi Valley.[47] That this bond had been fastened was the belief of no few Southerners, who expressed profound joy upon that happy union and cooperation between the West and the South which the meeting had evinced. The two sections, it was said, had similar interests, sympathies, and connections, and could never act otherwise than united; bound together by ties which could never be severed, their destinies were one; elevated or depressed they must go together. Calhoun, too, was of the opinion that his report in the Senate, which showed that the governmental power to regulate interstate commerce embraced the improvement of the navigation of the Mississippi, had greatly contributed to the removal of the great barrier that separated the South and West.[48]

Exuberant plaudits for the Memphis meeting also emanated from a professor of economics (J. D. B. DeBow), who with rapturous eloquence

rejoiced to see the Palmetto State and the time-honored Dominion

[46] Niles' Register, LXIX, 309.
[47] Calhoun's Correspondence, p. 698.
[48] Ibid., p. 700.

sending their sons to shake hands with the hardy pioneers of the distant Arkansas. We hail Texas, our younger sister, leaving the Gulf seat to hold converse with the distant lakes. It is a beautiful commingling, and long, long after the occasion has passed away, the remembrance of this assemblage on the high bluffs of the Father of Rivers will live fresh in memory—every bosom will retain the kindly influences which were exerted, and when the South and West are interested we will ever feel that we are brothers all—all citizens of one glorious Union.[49]

But this flowery enthusiasm subsided in time, and people began to perceive that though the Memphis doctrines and principles harmonized with the views of many portions of the country they did not command the sentiments of a majority of the West or of the Union, some regarding them as extending too wide the domain of action, while others as too restrictive, and suicidal to the interests of the West. The meeting had sought to conciliate all parties and agree on a compromise to meet approval of all sections, as the best thing to be done under the circumstances. As a result of these halfway tactics neither party was satisfied and finally another convention was called to meet in St. Louis to promote the interests of the inland commerce of the country.[50] Still another met in Chicago on the fifth of July, 1847, denounced the Memphis decisions as impracticable, injurious, and inadequate to the needs of the Northwest and the Lakes, and boldly declared for a thorough system of internal improvements by the Federal Government. Several thousand delegates attended, and very prominent persons approved or were directly connected with the convention. Webster and Clay heartily concurred. Benton and Silas Wright were much interested in the canal and harbor projects and there were letters from Cass and Van Buren. Georgia, who was not represented at Memphis, and one other Southern state sent delegates to the Chicago meeting,[51] and Duff Green urged Calhoun to attend but the latter did not approve of the suggestion, declaring that the people already knew his opinion on the matter of internal improvements.[52]

[49] DeBow's Review, I, 21.
[50] Southern Literary Messenger, XII, 121.
[51] DeBow's Review, IV, 122. Niles' Register, LXXII, 309, 331, 344, 365.
[52] Calhoun's Correspondence, p. 733.

CHAPTER IV

Southern Railroads and Manufactures

As early as 1834 plans and petitions had been made and presented to the government and to the people of various cities to aid in building a railroad to the Pacific coast, but not till after the Mexican War did the idea crystallize into a national project. For it was by this time that California became a fascinating magnet for restless frontiersmen, and thousands of adventurous souls responded to the golden call of the Far West. Travel to the Pacific thus assumed frenzied popularity; but it was a long and wearisome way and a transcontinental railroad was therefore looked upon as a vital necessity. The people of St. Louis, intimately familiar and in close contact with the mad migration, and seeing an opportunity to facilitate that traffic and at the same time boost their city, called for a convention representing all the states to come and consider the best plan for railroad and telegraphic communication with California and Oregon.[1] Accordingly, eight hundred delegates with Stephen A. Douglas as their chief assembled in October 1849 and passed among others, the resolution that it is the duty of the general government to provide for the construction of a central national railroad from the valley of the Mississippi to the Pacific with branches at Chicago, St. Louis, and Memphis. It was also unanimously agreed to reassemble at Philadelphia, the following April, and to invite the Memphis convention which was expected to meet shortly, to adopt similar resolutions. The latter assembly convened about a week after the one of St. Louis, for the purpose of advocating a more southerly route to the west coast. The following resolutions were adopted at Memphis:

1. That it is the duty of the general government to provide, at an early period, for the construction of a national railroad from the Mississippi river to the Pacific ocean.

[1] McMaster, The History of the People of the United States, VII, 579-584.

2. To facilitate the accomplishment of this object the general government should select an efficient and competent corps of engineers to make complete explorations and surveys of all the routes that have been designated by public opinion, as proper for the line of this road.

3. After the proper surveys shall have been completed the general government should select that route which is easiest of access, best calculated to subserve the purposes of national defense, most convenient to the people of, and (as far as practicable) central to, the United States, and upon which a railroad can be constructed on the cheapest and best terms.

4. That to carry into effect the object of the first resolution, in the opinion of this convention, the public lands of the United States constitute a legitimate and proper fund.

5. After the construction of the main trunk it is the duty of Congress to aid by the appropriation of the national domain in the construction of such branch railroads as will best connect it with the Northern lakes and the great thoroughfares leading to the Atlantic ocean and with such other points on the Mississippi completed or in the course of construction, and also to aid in the construction of branches to suitable points on the Gulf either east or west of the Mississippi.

6. It is the duty of the general government to provide, under liberal conditions for a connection between the main line of this national railroad and all roads now made or which may be made hereafter by the authority of the several states and territories of the Union.

7. It is the duty of Congress to establish military posts from the western confines of our Western states, along the southern boundaries of our republic and our Indian frontier, to the Pacific Ocean; that these ports should be located in all proper places, not far distant from each other, and that civilized and productive settlements should be encouraged around them, by sales and the grant of preemption rights of the public lands to actual settlers, and by such other encouragement as may be deemed necessary, so that by these means ample opportunities may be afforded to our engineers for an efficient survey of our possessions between the Western and Southern states and the Pacific ocean; and also to form practical roads to facilitate travel and the transportation of troops and arms, and so that the Mexican treaty could be fulfilled.

8. That a communication between this country and the Orient is of vast importance; that such communication can be obtained by ship, canal or railroad across the isthmus of Tehuantepec, Nicaragua, or Panama, or across them all; which railroads or canals may be constructed by private enterprise. In order to encourage the completion of such works, the convention recommends the passage of a law, by the Congress of the United States, directing the Postmaster General, Secretary of War, and Secretary of the Navy, to make annual contracts for the transportation of the mails, troops, and military and naval stores of the government, from the Atlantic to the Pacific ports of the country, by the shortest, speediest, and cheapest routes.

9. That in the event of the appropriation by Congress of a considerable portion of the public lands, or of the proceeds of the sales thereof, to the construction of a railroad from the Mississippi

to the Pacific, that liberal appropriations of the public lands should be made to aid them in the construction of their works of internal improvement.

10. They recommend, as possessing special advantages, the route commencing at San Diego, on the Pacific ocean, crossing the Colorado of the West, running along the Gila river, or near it, in a direction to the Paso del Norte, and thence across the state of Texas to its northeastern boundary, between 32 degrees and 34 degrees of north latitude, terminating at some point on the Mississippi between the mouth of the Ohio river and the mouth of the Red river.

A committee of seven was appointed by the president of the convention to collect and publish information, to prepare a memorial to Congress, and an address to the people, upon the subject of increasing the facilities of intercourse between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. The following men were the members of this committee: J. D. B. DeBow, of Louisiana; Absalom Fowler, of Arkansas; James C. Jones, of Tennessee; J. R. Strother, of Missouri; J. F. G. Mittag, of South Carolina; C. C. Mills, of Texas; G. S. Yerger, of Mississippi.[2]

New Orleans also wanted to be connected with the proposed transcontinental railway and saw the general need of more and better transportation for its large Western trade. A meeting was accordingly held, at first for the purpose of constructing a railroad to Jackson, Mississippi, but which was afterwards enlarged so as to admit the consideration of many other tributaries and contiguous routes.[3] They advocated a road from Brandon, Mississippi into Alabama, another from Memphis to Louisville, and they hoped that in the near future the capital of Kentucky would be only thirty-six hours from New Orleans, and that Washington would be reached in forty-eight.

James Robb, Esquire, an ardent booster of the Paris of America, made a warm and wordy appeal to merchants, property-holders, capitalists, and the public at large to gird up their loins and build the Jackson railroad which he believed would mark a new era in the history of their charming city. Mr. Robb said,

Our fate and interest are blended with those of the Great West. We must draw closer the bonds of alliance and interest with this vast, productive and energetic region of the country. Ours must be the metropolis to which the eleven millions of this vast empire will send their representatives to procure their supplies and luxuries,

[2] DeBow's Review, VII, 551.

[3] Ibid., VI, 74.

and to participate in the pleasures, amusements and festivities of our city. The freedom of our manners, the gayety of our habits, the absence of cant, of cold hypocrisy and bigotry, and the absurd sentiments they inspire, all render this city a more agreeable resort than any other in the country to the people of the West. We have only to increase the facilities of getting here, when the people of the West will look as naturally to New Orleans as the center of the arts, of fashion, and of ideas, as the people of France do to Paris.

These words evoked a great clapping of hands.

A few months later another convention assembled in New Orleans with plans for connecting that city with the interior and northwest parishes of Louisiana and with Texas. Mr. DeBow rejoiced over the fact that this was a gathering of true one hundred per cent and wealthy native Louisianans. Hitherto he had heard that only Northern enterprise could prevent his state from falling back into her original quagmires and swamps; but the tide had turned and now enterprising men born and bred in the South and even Creoles of French and American extraction were all united to save their city and state from decline and decay. Governor Mouton speaking for Louisiana farmers expressed his and their willingness to be taxed to meet the city half way in the contemplated railroad projects. Another speaker told the assembly how the people of the sugar and cotton states had slumbered and slept so long that the Northerners were allowed to go far ahead of them in the making of canals and railroads. He also described the importance and achievements of modern transportation, and then closed his remarks in style, by alluding to the great and glorious Union which he trusted would be perpetual, and which called forth much applause.[4]

At the suggestion of Mr. DeBow, this meeting decided to resolve itself into a general Southern and Western railroad convention to meet in New Orleans and to issue circulars inviting many eminent men from all such states as would desire to cooperate in a general system of railroads. The convention was expected to discuss the great subject of a communication with the Pacific ocean across the continent,

[4] Ibid., XI, 214.

to urge the Southwest to take hold of this matter herself, and to also press the subject of the Tehuantepec route upon the governments of Washington and of Mexico. Some saw in the coming assembly a favorable opportunity for considering many other great questions deeply interesting to all of the states, to wit, the extension of the manufactures in the Western Valley and throughout the South, and the opening of a direct foreign trade from Southern seaports. These matters were intimately connected with the success of railroad works and it was hoped the delegates would come prepared to report and speak on these points.[5]

On January 5, 1852, the convention assembled at New Orleans. There were present between six and eight hundred delegates, representing eleven states: Virginia, Kentucky, Missouri, Arkansas, Tennessee, Florida, Texas, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana. Ex-Governor Alexander Mouton, of Louisiana, was made president of the meeting and the following were to be vice-presidents: C. C. Tarpley, Mississippi; Joseph Forsyth, Florida; Gen. Lucius C. Polk, Tennessee; William N. Burwell, Virginia; Amos Morrill, Texas; H. Chonteau, Missouri; P. P. Parham, Alabama; J. N. Beadles, Kentucky; Judge James Campbell, Louisiana; Absalom Fowler, Arkansas. There were four secretaries: John Calhoun, Victor Wiltz, Louisiana; R. C. Farreley, Arkansas; John Duncan, Mississippi. According to the chairman's opening remarks the assembly had gathered for the purpose of adopting practicable plans for establishing a grand system of railroads which would make the Southwest what it ought to be, and to devise ways and means by which this great goal might be attained. Each delegation was to be called on to present its own projects and proposals.

Mr. James Robb, a prominent delegate from New Orleans, and chairman of the Ways and Means Committee of the convention was the first speaker. There were two important works which should be carefully considered. One was the great trunk line which was to complete the system of rail-

[5] Ibid., XI, 687.

road communication with the Atlantic seaboard and the Ohio Valley; and the other was the great Western line which was to penetrate the vast country beyond the Mississippi. The position of New Orleans was similar to that of New York in 1809, when the necessity of developing the western part of that state began to impress itself on the minds of the people. But New Orleans, the great Southern emporium had greater resources than New York ever had in the vast and fertile hinterland—in the country west of the Mississippi where lay a great empire and from whence would emanate untold wealth and power. To connect these immense resources with the famous Gulf port Mr. Robb advised and urged state assistance, and he advocated a tax as a means of building the railroads—a uniform tax between country and city. This plan of taxation for purposes of internal improvements, said the speaker, had been used by New York, Pennsylvania, and Ohio, which had all borrowed largely to build canals and railroads and then had taxed the whole people to pay the interest on their loan.

One of the chief drawbacks to New Orleans was the absence of an important trade; and why was it that a city exporting eighty or ninety millions of dollars annually was so insignificant in that branch of commerce? Because of the remoteness and uncertainty of her market, answered Mr. Robb, she was without a speedy, rapid, and cheap communication with the interior country that was seeking New Orleans as a market for its agricultural productions. But New Orleans could become a large importing city if they carried out the objects of this convention, that is facilitate access between New Orleans and every portion of the Valley of the Mississippi which was tributary to her trade; and without railroads this communication could not be established to compete successfully with the active enterprise of Northern rivals. Build railroads, make it possible to travel to Nashville in twenty hours, Memphis in twenty hours, and all the important points in the Eastern Valley of the Ohio and Mississippi in a like quick time, and the western borders and

Texas in a few hours. Then New Orleans would become a great city of imports, the produce of that rich agricultural empire would flow into her lap, not as a mere place of transit, but to be exchanged for the productions of other countries. Build these railroads and watch New Orleans commence the fulfillment of her destiny and see her become renowned and famous among the emporiums of the whole world.

The cry of deficiency in capital was unfounded, resumed Mr. Robb. There was more capital in the Southern States than in any other portion of the Confederacy. The absence of prosperity was not due to a want of capital but arose from the fact that the people had neglected the true and substantial interests and because of the discouragements that stood in the way of investments. The unfortunate circumstances of the public credit of Mississippi and Arkansas, and the overthrow of confidence, public and private, when public obligations were disregarded, fatally harmed the spirit of enterprise in the whole Southwest. Capital would never flow into a state that neglected the fulfillment of her public obligations; but all the savings of capital derived from industry and economy in such a state would let it go to places of greater security. If capital was so scarce and money so dear, why did it happen that the chief buyers of stocks for investment in New York were Southern people—people from Mississippi and Alabama, furnishing capital to enable their active and enterprising rivals to extend their highways and power; furnishing the aid that transferred to the North supremacy while it weakened and impoverished the South? And Mr. Robb appealed ardently: "If you are true Southerners, and I believe you all are, go to work and change all this by ordaining such laws as will inspire confidence at home and abroad; go to work and imitate your victorious rivals, build roads and create stock at home, give the guarantee of honesty and security, and my word for it, you will not only entice back the capital that is leaving you, but will invite it from abroad."

The Crescent City orator continued. There were other

causes besides adverse laws and imprudent neglect that unfavorably influenced the circulation of capital in the Southern section of the Union. The slavery agitation had created an uneasy feeling threatening their institutions and disturbing peace, tranquillity and confidence. This wicked and insane meddling by enemies of their society was a stupendous, but not an insurmountable evil. The South could overcome it, but only by being united in policy and interest, united by ties of closer intercommunication, by an extended and combined system of railroads, united by the development of her vast resources and the building up of a manufacturing interest. The building of railroads, the erection of manufactories and the demand for the skill and labor that they everywhere created would attract immigration to the South, would augment the white population who could become more permanent and settled in their pursuits. Attention to these interests would prove an element of increased security to their section, would hasten the recovery of their lost power and would do more for the South than all the political platforms ever framed. They must achieve economic independence if the security of the Union and their institutions were to be maintained.

The Southern States of this Union formed the most favored country under the sun; they had immense tracts of uncultivated land overflowing with fruitfulness and lying in wait for wise laws to make these regions great and prosperous. If legislation were favorable there would spring up a magnificent system of internal improvements, and New Orleans would not only be the greatest exporting but would become one of the greatest importing and commercial cities in the world, the New York of the South, the mart of a great and powerful empire.

The eloquent Mr. Robb then passed to another subject immensely and perennially interesting to the South—the protective tariff. The national government by its protection, he said, had aided the North in building up an industrial power and a huge population. The generosity of the South-

erners had fostered this enterprise, while at the same time they had done nothing for their own industry. They had rendered aid in building up Northern factories and squandered their capital, and so the North was dominant. If they wished thereafter to be equals in the Union they had to follow Northern example and develop their resources, strength, and power. When they embarked in manufacturing —when they increased employment of the white man an industrial population would flow their way and the South would be peopled by an efficient and substantial population and thus increase their voting power in the Union. In conclusion, they were informed that railroads, politically, morally, and socially were "the greatest of all missions, save that alone of our Saviour." They should build throughout the rich territory, promote trade, commerce, population, and production and the Southwest would enter upon a career which would shame the greatness of the richest empires of the world, and New Orleans would be the Empire City of the Southwest, the Paris of the New World, the center of prosperity, of wealth, of enlightenment, of the arts and sciences, and of everything else that makes a people great and free.[6]

Mr. J. T. Trezevant of Memphis, described the movement as a grand game of chess in which New Orleans was playing against the cities of the Atlantic seaboard for the great prize of the avenues of commerce. Commercial independence of the Southwest was the first aim but with it was intimately blended the political independence of the whole South. To attain this goal New Orleans as the leading business center was looking to the commerce of the Ohio Valley which was worth more than the commerce of any other portion of the Union. She could rescue this valuable trade from the energetic rivals of New York and other Atlantic cities and retain it by constructing a railroad to connect Louisville with Memphis and the latter with New Orleans. This railroad

[6] Ibid., XII, 546.

alone would be sufficient to checkmate the contestants from the East.

In addition to speeches by the more loquacious delegates there were many resolutions and detailed reports setting forth the plans of each railroad project. Mr. W. M. Burwell, of Virginia, representing the Committee on Routes, announced that they regarded the following system of internal improvements as indispensable to the development of the agricultural, commercial, and mineral wealth of the Southwestern states and cities, and as essential to the equality and unity of the States of the Confederacy; and they earnestly recommended the same to the patriotic consideration of the legislatures and citizens of the Southwestern states.

1. A national road to the Pacific Ocean; with one terminus on the Mississippi River north and one south of the Ohio river, so as to divide the advantages of each road as equally as possible among the different states of the Union.

2. The Southwestern National Railroad from Washington City to New Orleans, passing through the states of Virginia, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana; constituting the shortest practicable line of mail and travel transit, and consisting of the following continuous sections now under construction, to wit: the Richmond and Lynchburg Railroad, the Virginia and Tennessee Road, the Georgia and Alabama Road, the Alabama and Tennessee River Road, the Selma and Jackson Road, the New Orleans and Jackson Road.

3. For Kentucky—The Memphis and Louisville Road, the Louisville and Nashville Road.

4. For Tennessee—The Memphis and Louisville Road, the Memphis and Charleston Road, the Louisville and Nashville Road, the Nashville and Southwestern Road, and the roads embraced in the "National Route" above referred to.

5. For Alabama—The Mobile and Ohio Road, and the roads embraced in the "National Route" referred to.

6. For Georgia and Florida—The Gulf Road, or a continuation of the Southwestern Road of Georgia to Pensacola Bay; the Florida and Peninsula Road.

7. For Mississippi—The Mobile and Ohio Road; the New Orleans Jackson and Nashville Road, the New Orleans, Holly Springs and Ohio Road, the Vicksburg and Jackson Road, extended by Brandon eastward to Selma.

8. For Arkansas—The Arkansas and Mississippi River Road, from Fort Smith or Van Buren to Little Rock, and thence to White River and there diverging to Memphis and Helena. A road from Fayetteville to Van Buren; and one from the Central Railroad, leaving the same near St. Francis Ridge, through Jackson and Independence counties to Southwestern Missouri. A road from Little Rock to the Louisiana line, to intersect with the New Orleans

and Opelousas Railroad. A road from Northeastern Texas to Little Rock, crossing Red River at or near Fulton.

9. For Louisiana—The New Orleans, Algiers, Texas and El Paso Road, the Madisonville and Jackson Road, the Vicksburg and Shreveport Road, the New Orleans and Nashville Road.

10. For Texas—A road from a point on the northeastern part of the state (connecting with the Little Rock and Fulton Road) to run on the dividing ridge of the Sulphur and Red River to the ridge between Bois D'Arc and Sulphur; thence to Dallas, and to connect with the New Orleans and El Paso Route. The continuation of the New Orleans, and El Paso Road through Texas.

11. For Missouri—The road from St. Louis westward; the Hannibal and St. Joseph Road.

The second section being under consideration was amended by proposing a route from Paducah at the mouth of the Tennessee River to the Tennessee state line, to intersect the road from New Orleans and Mobile. The convention also advocated a railway and water communication across the Isthmus of Tehuantepec. The resolutions were then adopted by a unanimous vote of the delegates.[7]

Considering voluntary subscriptions inadequate for the accomplishment of such grand enterprises they recommended and requested a liberal application of the resources of the states interested in these works, and the appropriation of public lands to be made by a general law to include all the projects proposed. It was further resolved that since the general government shares in the benefits of railroads when the latter pass through the public domains it ought to contribute by grants of land to the cost of such works. The people were given the right to subscribe through their municipal and parochial corporations for the stock of railroads calculated to advance their interests and the legislatures of the different states were asked to authorize their cities, parishes and counties to make such subscriptions when desired by the respective inhabitants. The resources for the payment of such subscriptions when made, ought to be derived from taxes levied on landed property, inasmuch as that species of property was, more than any other, benefited and enhanced in value by works of internal improvement. Whenever sub-

[7] Ibid., XII, 316.

scriptions were made by cities, counties or parishes, it was inexpedient that the administration of the stock thus subscribed should remain under the control of the local authorities, and it ought to be distributed among those whose property had been taxed for its payment, in proportion to the amount paid by each; to the end that each individual might be stimulated by personal interest to a vigilant supervision of the conduct of the work. The final resolution called for the appointment of a committee of three which should address memorials to the Congress of the United States and to the legislatures of the separate states in support of the foregoing plans.

The connection of the Southern Atlantic seaboard with the Pacific ocean by means of a railroad was declared to be of commanding national importance, and therefore worthy of governmental favor and assistance. The delegates hoped that in view of the high commercial and political considerations involved, this important highway would soon be constructed; and they were of the opinion that the Congress of the United States could not make a more just and judicious disposal of the public domain lying within the south of California than the appropriation of a large and liberal portion of the same for the completion of this great undertaking. The route recommended as the most eligible and practicable for this railroad commenced at San Diego or San Francisco, ran east along the Gila River in a direction to the Paso del Norte and thence through the State of Texas along the 33d degree of north latitude. It was decided to draft a memorial to Congress setting forth the advantages and the practicability of the proposed road and to ask the appropriation of fifty million acres of the public lands in the State of California, for the construction of this great Southwestern railway.[8]

The convention listened to more speeches—one by Judah P. Benjamin, another by Judge Mills, of Texas, and a third by Col. Tarpley, of Mississippi, each one advocating his favorite road and railroads in general. Mr. Edward Bates,

[8] Ibid., XII, 305, 316.

of St. Louis, unable to attend, sent his felicitations and his opinion on the prospective noble enterprises. If the people of the South and West, wrote the gentlemen from Missouri, would only set themselves to work to improve the rivers, construct the roads, build up the manufactures, establish lines of commerce straight across the Atlantic, instead of sailing round to New York and Boston only to pay toll, then they would not only see the surface of their country enriched and advanced, but they would breathe a purer moral and political atmosphere. Instead of angry bickerings and dangerous quarrels with brethren of the North and East about the blacks, to the total neglect of the true interests of the whites, they should strive with them in the more worthy and patriotic enterprises of peace and friendship. Mr. A. V. Brown, of Nashville, also wrote a letter and hoped the convention would have a most salutary influence on the destiny of the South and West. The delegates were informed that the Tennessee legislature had already issued railroad charters, that it would welcome more such companies, and would grant charters to every railroad crossing their state.

The convention was advised not to confine its labors to railroads alone but to extend its views to foreign trade and commerce and to the introduction and encouragement of a more extensive system of general manufactures with particular attention to the Southern staple. Planters were urged to build factories and employ their slaves as operatives, and to divert at least a fourth of agricultural labor from the production to the manufacture of cotton. Negroes were considered the least expensive, the most active and intelligent workers available in the South; and the cost of production would be low, since the only outlay necessary would be machinery and one or two minor matters. From this would result a steadiness and elevation of price to the raw material which would better justify its cultivation. Internal improvements would then be achieved, foreign imports would come of themselves, and the ability to furnish assorted cargoes would soon attract a direct trade to the great satisfaction of the Southern cities.

William Gregg, of Charleston, urged the Southerners to give up their notions of exclusive agriculture and turn more of their attention to those branches of industry which would diversify their occupations. He believed that such a step would tend to vivify the intellect of the masses, bring out the ingenuity of many people and give life and energy to the vast operations and railroads being planned. Without such a change in public sentiment as would divert capital into channels other than the growing of cotton, the soil would become worn out and the commercial cities decline. If factories, railroads and other improvements were neglected mercantile capital would continue to leave the South to find more profitable investments elsewhere. Mr. Gregg did not advise employing slaves in industry as others did, but believed that the negroes were more efficient as field workers in hot climates and that white people ought to devote themselves to arts, commerce and manufactures. It was recommended by another that the planters employ some of their slave force in building railroads—in works of grading embankments, cutting timber, fuel, bridging, etc.,—such a division of labor being almost a clear gain to the wealth of the country and a more profitable use than the customary concentration on cotton. As a motto for the South, Mr. Gregg suggested: "The Plow, The Anvil and the Loom." [9]

Mr. DeBow, a delegate from New Orleans, delivered a long and spirited speech, hoping thereby to extract action from an almost desperate state of inertia. He painted a woeful picture of the South's desuetude, her dependent and degrading position and he appealed to the pride and perhaps prejudice of the assembled delegates to bestir themselves. It was high time, said the speaker, that the people get up, and do something for themselves in this iniquitously governed Confederacy. Here they were forever in debt, without surplus for any purpose, and always had to repair to the North whenever they would procure a little capital to build a dam or a mill. They invested nearly everything in a staple which

[9] Ibid., XII, 427, 499.

was forever at one extreme or the other. They were offered a large price when they had none to sell; but when their warehouses were laden with it, they could find nobody willing to buy. And when they needed shoes for their feet, a hat on their head, a coat, shirt, pin or buttons they had to go to the North; and to people, many of whom were hostile to the South in interest and in feeling; who estimated their connection by the dollars that it brought them; who had even excommunicated Southerners as slave holders at the sacred altar; a people who robbed them of their slaves and mobbed them when they attempted to reclaim them, and, "like the hard Egyptian taskmasters continued to exact the toll of brick after they had taken away from them the straw with which they could make it"; for the North realized out of the cotton fields as much as the South herself, and, in the manufacturing which she conducted for the Southerners, made a clear profit of more than forty million dollars each year.

Mr. Debow then came to commerce—that commerce which had made the North great and powerful by the labor of the Southern people. Whatever they produced and whatever they bought went through Northern hands, and again they presented the Yankees with forty million dollars profit per annum. And this, too, when before the Revolution, the Southern colonies, with a smaller population than New England, New York and Pennsylvania, exported abroad directly nearly five times as much produce. In the same period Carolina and Georgia exported twice the value of New York, Pennsylvania and New England. In the years from 1821 to 1830, New York alone exceeded these states. Thus, adding the loss alluded to in the preceding paragraph, a total of a grand eighty million dollars were taken annually from them, which should have legitimately been retained in their midst and which could yet be retained if they were true to themselves.

But this was not all, continued the speaker, and he asked,

How much more does the North receive from us annually in the

support of her schools and her colleges, her editors, her authors and her clergy, her Saratogas and her Newports, her allurements of various kinds—and more than all how much do her citizens, who come among us to gather wealth, return home with, to build up those colossal interests there, which are the wonder of the world. Is there any reciprocity, sirs? Who of the North reads a Southern book?—they have said this themselves sneeringly—who visits a Southern watering place—attends a Southern college? I think it would be safe to estimate the amount which is lost to us annually by our vassalage to the North at one hundred million dollars. Great God! Does Ireland sustain a more degrading relation to Great Britain? Will we not throw off this humiliating dependence, and act for ourselves? What a country would be the South, could we retain this money at home—What ships and navies we should have—What dense and metropolitan and magnificent cities—What manufacturing establishments, making every hill and valley vocal with the whirl of machinery—What railroads radiating to every village and town, like the arteries from the human heart—What mineral resources developed—What watering places, crowded with wealth and fashion and beauty—What schools and colleges, in which our sons should be reared to fidelity to their native South—What dense population—What wealth and what power—and yet we are now poor and scattered, and in this isolation and dependence of our condition, afraid almost of our very shadows upon the wall.

Throw off this yoke of bondage and begin to show your manhood at once. We are poor and miserable, whereas we should be great. In a question between the North and South, I prefer the South. Charity begins at home. Not that I love Caesar less but Rome more. Whatever divisions exist in Southern politics there can be none upon this of Southern Industrial Independence. Fire-eater and compromiser must all meet here, unless they go beyond Scripture, and love others better than themselves. Here is a separate state action upon which all must agree—that of loom and spindle and locomotive. This is the extent of my fire-eating. If it be treason, make the most of it.

Mr. Debow ended this phase of his exhortation by quoting from a Yankee poet, named Longfellow, the stanza that would have men up and doing, to labor and to wait.

Then as an example of Southern lassitude, the speaker touched upon the sleep of his own "Crescent City," telling how she had dissipated her time and wasted her substance in riotous living; and how as a result, her trade had flowed away to other cities. Finally, it was his purpose to arouse not only New Orleans, but the entire cotton kingdom, to light up the torches of industry and show them the way to salvation. Heretofore they had been forced to pray and compromise for their rights, but with economic independence would come strength, confidence, and power, and the South-

ern States would be feared and respected. As a last warning the convention was told that their institutions—the very existence of the South, was in danger. The great powers of Europe, the hands of all mankind were against them. Their only hope lay in diversified industry, which would give them physical strength, sinews of defense and war; for they would have to fight to save their slaves and the civilization of the South.[10]

[10] Ibid., XII, 500.

CHAPTER V

The Commercial Movement Matures

Conventions had met, had planned, had resolved to build ships, railroads, and factories, but the aristocratic Southerners, like the late haughty Greeks and Romans refused to engage in middle class and servile pursuits; and as a result, cotton, though still king in the South, was losing its grip on the national sceptre. However, the proud planters were not blind to their waning power, and sought remedies of their own, rejecting all advice from bourgeois economists who incessantly proclaimed diversification of industry as the only solution. They held agricultural assemblies. They complained of irregular and unremunerative prices of their staple. They studied the causes of fluctuating prosperity and promised to administer adequate panaceas. Blame for depressed conditions in the cotton market was generally put on New York and Liverpool monopolies and speculation. And to break this pernicious combination they recommended a compact among the planters to reduce the cotton crop and to fix and preserve a certain arbitrary standard of price. But the recipes were patently ineffective.[1]

Direct distribution from Southern seaports to Europe was also proposed as one of the most feasible correctives for economic ills. Accordingly there appeared a returning spirit among the few shipping centers of the South for commercial enterprise and adventure, and thus the movement of the late thirties for the purpose of fostering foreign trade was recalled. The slave-holding states, it was said, should cease to play a subordinate part and should no longer delay action in procuring their due weight in the commercial movements of the world. The planters should be rendered independent of New York and Liverpool.

Mr. Charles G. Baylor, of Washington, one of the leading

[1] DeBow's Review, XI, XII, XIII, XVI, XXV. Niles' Register, LVI, 350, LVII, 185.

advocates of Southern direct trade, saw a mighty torrent from Liverpool and New York, sweeping ruthlessly over the South with desolating effect; and he hoped complete annihilation would be averted by a successful revolt against the iniquitous "Government of Trade." However, before despairing or adopting rash modes of resistance, it was well that their course be marked by common sense,—caution but firmness. "One thing is evident, that unless something is done the future of the South will be that of Ireland. She must inevitably become a mere province to sustain the commercial and manufacturing cupidity of others. The South loses annually on her exports from 12 to 15 per cent. of their value in unnecessary charges and expenses, and in consequence of a circuitous transportation pays 20 to 100 per cent. enhanced valuation on her imports." [2]

This agitation was not altogether fruitless, for some cities showed symptoms of arising from their sound sleep. And ere long the people of Charleston were said to be highly gratified when a British ship brought 800 bales of gunny bagging from Calcutta—their first direct communication with the East. It was predicted that in the near future Charleston commerce with the Orient would rival even that of Boston. Then a little later 1,980 bags of coffee arrived from Rio de Janeiro, and again the South Carolina metropolis was depicted as the coming emporium of the South. Norfolk, too, was now engaged in importing, and it was reported that this city had brought at least one cargo of sugar from the West Indies. While down in New Orleans several enterprising gentlemen discussed the subject of a line of foreign vessels from their port and proposed a company of 450 persons, subscribing 1,000 dollars each and two steamers of 1,500 or 1,600 tons, capable of carrying 200 passengers and 3,200 bales of cotton. But no one came forward to buy shares and the project was abandoned with the thousand others.[3]

Virginia, more centrifugal than sectional, was much affected by this grand commercial spirit and held improvement con-

[2] DeBow's Review, XIII, 318. [3] Ibid., XI, 651; XII, 560.

ventions of her own. The grievances of the old Dominion, as well as of the whole South, were vividly set forth in a petition of the Central Southern Rights Association who, with melancholy pen, compared the pristine and present status of the Southern States. Our fathers, opens the lament, were wealthy, contented, prosperous and happy. They could sit under their vine and fig tree ruling the councils of the nation, powerful, respected and unafraid. But behold them now:

They occupied the same soil; they had as much energy as their fathers; yet how sad and degrading was their present situation when contrasted with the old. The Southerners had become a divided, depressed, and discontented people; their property was being wantonly purloined; their feelings outraged, and their interests disregarded. With agricultural productions which should command the commerce of the world, continued the report, they were like Ireland, dependent on others for the very necessaries of life. And this deplorable change in their situation had been caused by none other than the pernicious hand of government, for such deleterious effects could never be caused by temporary, trivial, or accidental circumstances. Unlawful and fanatical combinations in the Northern States possessing vast sums of money had forced their prejudices on the politics of the nation, and were bent on overthrowing Southern institutions and destroying Southern property. The strife between the sections was "fraught with consequences, scarce inferior to those which hung upon our first great struggle. Virginia has the deepest veneration for the Union, a cordial admiration for those sister states with whom she contends for her heritage; but she cannot break the bread of dependence, or sink into the position of an inferior to those who are her equals." [4]

Mr. William M. Burwell of Bedford, one of the leading figures in the direct trade movement of Virginia, and an important speaker at one of the conventions, declared that the movement was in no way due to sectional prejudice, but would only arouse Virginia from her supineness. The circuitous

[4] Ibid., XII, 109.

trade by way of Northern seaports involved unworthy tribute and should therefore cease. He showed how the export and import trade of the state was heavily taxed and burdened by Northern merchants, and pointed out that all the commercial profit accruing from freights, exchanges, as well as from importation and supply of the goods received on exchange, resulted to the exclusive benefit of Northern capital and Northern enterprise. Mr. Burwell then recommended the establishment of a commercial marine, of sail boats and steamers to convey their trade abroad to exchange for the products of other nations.

Statistics follow, from which it is learned that as far back as 1769 Virginia imported in value over 4,000,000 dollars while New York did not import 1,000,000. In 1791 Virginia imported 2,486,000 and New York 3,022,000. Virginia exported 3,131,000; New York, 2,505,000 at the same period. Since the adoption of the Constitution when the commerce of New York and Virginia were about equal the exports of the latter had remained nearly stationary and the imports had fallen off to about one-sixth of what they had been, while those of New York had increased nearly fifty times and the exports sixteen times. The exports of the whole Union in 1850 amounted to 151,898,720 dollars and the imports 178,138,318 dollars. New York exported nearly one-third and imported three-fifths.[5]

The Richmond convention of 1850 advocated a line of mail or other steamers, or other vessels, from Hampton Roads to some port or ports of Europe. All states disposed to aid in the enterprise, Virginia, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Kentucky, were to be appealed to; and appeal was to be made to Congress to bestow upon such line the same mail facilities extended to Northern lines. Lines of packet ships, screw propellers, or mail steamers should be established between the exporting cities of Virginia and the West Indies and South America. Also, the bars which obstructed the navigation of the James River should be removed. Another resolution

[5] Ibid., XII, 109.

called for the preparation of memorials to Congress and the legislature of Virginia and an address to the public, to point out the importance of the subject aforesaid, and the greater necessity for the South in general to conduct her own trade in her own bottoms with her own men and means. Merchants of Virginia were advised to import directly the foreign productions used and consumed in that and adjoining states; and merchants of the interior and the people at large were asked to aid them in this noble enterprise. Finally, the people of Virginia were requested to hold meetings in their several counties, cities, and towns to carry out the above resolutions; and to this end it was recommended that they adopt some organization, by the appointment of standing and corresponding committees, or otherwise as to them should seem best.[6]

The Central Southern Rights Association petitioned the state legislature to enact such excise laws as might be fit and proper, discriminating in favor of such articles as would promote the growth of manufacture or direct importation in the State of Virginia. They also wanted a permanent system of taxation upon Northern manufactures and imports brought to Virginia for consumption, as being the most certain means of securing ultimately the state's commercial independence of the North and the surest basis upon which to found her future hopes of safety and happiness.[7]

Virginia also claimed her legitimate share of the trade of the great valleys of the Ohio and Mississippi, and to advertise this claim a three day convention was held at Union, near Salt Sulphur Springs. It was said to be one of the largest internal improvement meetings in the state's history, embracing many talented and progressive men. General Peter H. Steinberger of Mason, was president of the assembly and Mr. Jefferson Kinney was secretary. Able addresses strongly set forth the value of railroad connection with Kentucky; of the completion of the Central railroad, the Norfolk and Petersburg road; of the extension of the works of the

[6] Ibid., XII, 30.

[7] Ibid., XII, 109.

James River and Kanawha Company by a railroad from Covington to Clifton Forge and on to the Ohio River. They asked for the completion of the Virginia-Tennessee railroad, the immediate construction of a branch of that line down New River to the mouth of Greenbrier, and for a railroad from the western terminus of the canal to the Ohio River to be connected under the auspices of the James River and Kanawha Company; all aimed at uniting the waters of the West with those of the Chesapeake.

These proposals were embodied in resolutions and accepted by the delegates. To facilitate the completion of the projects the convention called on the state to adopt a policy of lending money to the various internal improvement companies, the latter being required to pay the interest and give mortgages on their respective works for the principal. In this way, it was hoped, Virginia would be enabled to retrieve her declining fortunes and save herself from the burden of perpetual taxation.[8]

While Virginia was thus striving to improve her own commercial conditions enterprising men of other states were constantly complaining of the South's general material backwardness and advocated a united South and a complete economic secession from their grasping Northern masters. In Alabama men also knew that material prosperity begets political power and so the state legislature of 1851-52 listened to the report of its committee on commerce:

> It is true there is now no open war of arms against us, yet it requires no prophet to see, in the present natural course of events, gradually growing up one, amongst the most bloody wars recorded in the pages of history. . . . We have it in our power, if we will seize at once the favorable opportunity (direct trade with Europe), of gaining a great political victory; not by the shedding of brothers' blood, as Washington and his co-patriots were compelled to do, in order to secure political liberty, but by a commercial and manufacturing resolution which, instead of burdening us with heavy taxes, will annually advance our aggregate wealth by many millions.[9]

Other propagandists reminded the people of the old South:

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[8] Ibid., XIII, 525, 641.

[9] J. W. DuBose, The Life and Times of William L. Yancey, p. 358.

The South which fought the battles of the Revolution—which gave the statesmen, the generals, and the wealth of those early times—which concentrated there the agriculture, the commerce, and even to some extent, the manufactures of the continent, but which has lost, or is losing everything else, save that of agriculture; and even this last resource, growing less and less remunerative, threatens in the event to complete her beggary. How much has the South promised, and how little has she fulfilled? Her manufactures originated coeval with those of the North, and where there were not fifteen cotton factories in the whole Union, she had constructed an immense one in her limits. Nearly half a century has passed since then, and yet the South, though growing nearly all the cotton required for the world's consumption leaves 29-30ths of the profitable business of its conversion into fabrics to other and foreign hands.

And how has it been with our commerce? When New England struggled with the whale in Northern seas, the rich argosies of the South, laden with abundant products, were seeking the markets of all Europe. Seventy years before the Revolution, Maryland, Virginia and Carolina furnished the entire exports of the colonies and imported more largely than New England or New York. Fifty years before the Revolution things had but slightly changed, and the exports of New York, New England and Pennsylvania together were less in amount than those of the single colony of Carolina. Even in 1775 the exports of New York were 187,000 pounds, Carolina, 579,000 pounds, Virginia, 758,000. Imports of New York—1,200 pounds, Virginia and Maryland—2,000, Carolina—6,000. Georgia, a new plantation, equaled New York. As late as the close of the century, Charleston continued to contest the palm with New York. But how was that struggle ended? What has become of Southern commercial competition now that New York and New England conduct nine-tenths of the imports of the country and one-half of its exports, though nearly all of these exports with which, of course, the imports are purchased are of Southern material and more than an equal proportion of the imports are for Southern consumption? Thus it is calculated that the South lends from year to year a trading capital to the North amounting to nearly one hundred millions of dollars and upon which the North receives the entire profits! Can it be wondered at, then, that the North grows rich and powerful and great whilst we at best, are stationary?[10]

And so with railroads. The North had opened innumerable communications with the Mississippi Valley, and was draining it of the most valuable products, in return flooding it with the products of her workshops and her commerce and bringing untold riches to herself. The South's only communications were what nature had given her—the great river and its tributaries—and this was soon to be superseded by railroads. With twenty years of experience, a population equal to the North, and territory five times as great they still

[10] DeBow's Review, XII, 557.

had but one-third the actual miles of railroad constructed. The North had expended thirty times as much upon railroads as they had, and possessed twelve times, or including Texas, eighteen times the extent of railroads to the square mile.

As a cure for the evils diversification was again strongly recommended. The South had been content to be solely agriculturists, and to exhaust the fertility of an abundant soil. Many slaves were becoming consumers in a larger degree than they were producers, and labor was thus expended without profit. They should diversify their occupations and find new employment for labor. First, they ought to construct railroads to open the country and extend their population. This would raise the price of land, build up cities, and win the West. Then they could look to the Gulf, to the Caribbean, to the great South American continent and its wonderful resources. Another great remedy was manufactures. Let planters set aside some of their hands for this purpose. Capital would then flow South, for a high degree of profit awaited it here. Finally they should extend their foreign commerce, that is, connect their cities with the ports of Europe by lines of steamers.

Mr. DeBow of New Orleans was one of the leading advocates of diversification of industry, and as a means of arousing the people from their inactivity and to keep the subject of economic improvement in constant agitation he recommended the permanent organization of the erstwhile commercial convention. "It is the misfortune with us," said Mr. DeBow in one of his numerous harangues, "that when we have been aroused in the past it has been by paroxysms, and never followed by sustained efforts. We have come together in convention, but when the convention adjourned that was the end of it. Nobody had power to act in the recess. The thing soon passed out of mind." To prevent further evaporation of the usually planned projects Mr. DeBow advised that the convention resolve itself into a permanent body to meet regularly each year in the various cities of the

South. And in this way the third stage of the movement for Southern commercial independence was started.[11]

The first of this series of conferences which continued to the outbreak of the Civil War, was held in a border state. Baltimore, though not particularly interested in the commercial independence of the Southern States as a unit, did have a natural desire to improve her position as a commercial center and to attract Southern and Western business to her port. So the Baltimore Board of Trade invited manufacturers, merchants and others of the South and Southwest to meet in their city, professedly to stimulate the commercial progress of these states in their direct intercourse with Europe, and to discuss plans of developing their internal trade.[12] The following states sent delegates: Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, Tennessee, Kentucky, Missouri, Indiana, South Carolina, North Carolina, Virginia and Maryland. The District of Columbia was also represented. The convention was not well attended but it comprised some of the most respectable, wealthy and influential men of the country.[13] A large number of congressmen were present, among them Messrs. Breckenridge, Stanton, Preston, Underwood of Kentucky; Senators Jones and F. P. Stanton of Tennessee; Senators Dawson, Clemens, Downs and Pratt.[14]

An address by Mr. Brantz Mayer opened the convention. In behalf of the Board of Trade he welcomed the delegates who, he said, had come to consider questions of interest to their respective sections as well as to Baltimore. He then proceeded to proclaim that city's eminence in various particular lines—tobacco, manufactures, and luxurious oysters. Baltimore, according to the speaker, was the original and natural terminus of the great internal trade indicated by nature herself in the geography of the country, and lately art through the medium of the Baltimore and Ohio railroad, had effected

[11] Ibid., XII, 560.
[12] Baltimore Sun, December 17, 1852. Baltimore American, December 23, 1852.
[13] Baltimore Sun, December 20, 1852.
[14] New York Tribune, December 20, 1852.

a marriage between the Chesapeake and Ohio, thus reinforcing nature's benevolence. Then Mr. Mayer attempted to convert the audience to the Baltimore belief. His city wished to win the favor of the South and West, he said. Boston, New York, and Philadelphia, had also striven to grasp what Southern industry produced. But they could not destroy a geographical fact that Baltimore was not only a natural channel and the central point of the seaboard union in instantaneous intercourse with the national capital; that its railway was the shortest, directest and most economical communication between the Ohio and the sea. Domestic and foreign, all lines of trade converged at Baltimore, like the spokes of a wheel, which should touch and gather the produce of every section. A central position and fine facilities of transportation made her obviously a national entrepôt, and would some day force the North to regard Baltimore as the best exchange for the disposal of its manufactures, and the best market for the Southern States. Baltimore was nearest the North, nearest the South, nearest the West, in fact, nearest to all. It was the nearest manufacturer of the North, the producer of the South and West, the speculator of Europe and purchasers everywhere—the most suitable mart for the productions of the South and West.

The Hon. William C. Dawson of Georgia, who presided over the assembly, declared in his opening address that they had come in response to the invitation of the local Chamber of Commerce to see the advantages of Baltimore as a port and trading center. This city, in the opinion of Mr. Dawson, was entitled to the trade of the West and South by the laws of trade—she was entitled to it from her position, and it was the part of wisdom and justice to meet her. Coming from the South, he was perhaps not so much interested as the West, but he was a national man, and was opposed to the system of making New York the London of America—he was opposed to concentrating a preponderant population in one place. He would not ask the assistance of the government in undertaking any Southern enterprise but would

appeal to all people of capital from the city of Baltimore to the Rio Grande.

Lieutenant M. F. Maury in an interesting and instructive speech impressed the audience with the importance of South American trade. He told of the rich field of enterprise and commerce opened upon the great slopes of the Southern continent and of the wonderful possibilities of the Amazon valley. He described this region as a slave country, a great safety valve for the Union, and in conclusion urged the Southerners to establish commercial connections and friendly intercourse between their section and South America. The Hon. R. I. Bowie, of Maryland, also spoke in behalf of the Amazon project. Mr. T. B. Graf, consul of the Netherlands at the city of Baltimore, offered his assistance to the convention in promoting trade with his country, and in behalf of the Dutch Government made a definite and official proposition aiming to embark in the construction of a line of steamers to the Maryland metropolis. Another similar enterprise undertaken with the Belgian chargé d'affaires was outlined in a paper read by Mr. John C. Brune, of Baltimore.[15]

Some delegates were disappointed in the proceedings, regarding the meeting as insufficiently Southern in feeling. Mr. William M. Burwell, of Virginia, informed the audience that he had come as a humble foot soldier—a private in the ranks of the South, but loving the Union as much as anyone. It was a source of deep regret to him to find that the convention did not manifest as much interest in the great subject of Southern commerce as it should have. The rights of the South, he said, rested upon their own ability to maintain them and they had to be restored by labor, by persistent, energetic, and untiring labor. The great secret of Northern supremacy and Southern decline was in the fact that there were more people in the North than in the South, and population was power. To induce people to come to the South and to prevent them from leaving they needed variety of employ-

[15] Baltimore American, December 20, 1852. Baltimore Sun, December 20, 1852.

ment. Let them encourage immigration and provide the newcomers with jobs, and they would see an immediate regeneration of their section. New York's harbor was no better than Norfolk's, but New York was the more powerful and influential city because strangers from various parts of the country and the globe gravitated to the place where employment was to be found. They should improve their agriculture and their commerce, open mines, spin cotton, develop other pursuits, and they would retain their population and offer inducement to others to come to them. For people were the positive elements of power.

Mr. J. D. Freeman, of Mississippi, brought up the subject of a Southern railroad to the Pacific declaring it unworthy of a Southern convention to fail to adopt a resolution favoring the project. The Southwestern States approved of the motion and sought the sanction of Virginia. Mr. C. G. Baylor, of Washington, opposed the measure, declaring that this was no mass meeting and that general resolutions were inappropriate. The foundation of this body, according to Mr. Baylor had been laid three years ago in Europe, and proper time having arrived to give it substance the Baltimore Board of Trade saw fit to invite the convention to hold a meeting in their city. This was a convention of trade, of dollars and cents, and its originators, asserted the speaker, did not come forward with any hypotheses but with two practical propositions from the Belgian and Netherland governments to open lines of steamers with the South.[16]

Final resolution approved Mr. Mayer's admirable address of welcome and expressed sympathy with the noble efforts of the city of Baltimore to secure the commerce of the Southern States. As a means of promoting the prosperity and permanency of the Union the Convention recommended the general improvement of commercial facilities and the increase of intercommunication between cities and states of the South, West and Southwest. They hailed the completion of the

[16] Richmond Enquirer, December 22, 1852. Baltimore American, December 20, 1852.

Baltimore and Ohio railroad with great satisfaction and looked to it as a great benefit to the interior states. The question of a great commercial center for national exchanges, it was believed, would necessarily depend upon the cheapness of transportation and it was therefore decided to ascertain the freight and transportation rates that Baltimore charged for her domestic and foreign trade, and a committee was appointed to ascertain and publish after the completion of the Baltimore and Ohio railroad to Wheeling, the rates on that road of all important articles of commerce. The merchants of Baltimore were advised, as a means of securing the trade of the West, to establish a line or lines of steamers between their city and Liverpool and other important ports of Europe and South America. The Federal Government was requested to foster steam communication between the South and the Amazon and to build up commerce with the Atlantic slope of South America. Another resolution declared that while the convention "disdained the slightest prejudice or hostility to the welfare and prosperity of any particular section or city, North or South," it might reasonably promote the commercial interests and prosperity of Baltimore, and so excite a wholesome and beneficial competition with more Northern Atlantic cities, which would be advantageous to the nation at large as well as to the Southern States.[17]

The convention was not as characteristically Southern as some had expected it to be, and by being more definite the resolutions appeared rather partial toward Baltimore. The avowed purpose of the Marylanders was to devise measures to render Baltimore the commercial metropolis of the country and in this way to free Southern trade from the contamination of the free soilers. The city's superior commercial advantages were set forth, advertised, and enforced throughout the proceedings.[18] In New York opinion of the convention was divided. One editor wished Baltimore well[19] re-

[17] DeBow's Review, XIV, 373.
[18] Baltimore American, December 23, 1852.
[19] The Journal of Commerce, quoted in Baltimore American, December 25, 1852.

minding his friends in Maryland that speeches and resolutions followed by costly banquets and social good times would not make their city any greater. Southern dependence was due to the attraction of capital to the North, to force of habit, and to the resistless influence of the commercial legislation of the country.[20] The Baltimore Sun confessed that conventions could only express resolutions and that it was all that should be expected. Nevertheless the prevalence of good feeling and uniform desire to aid and the confidence inspired by the proceedings ought to prove of considerable service in tempering the policy of the future.[21]

[20] New York Tribune, December 20, 1852.
[21] Baltimore Sun, December 20, 1852.

CHAPTER VI

Expansion and Internal Improvements

The last convention had been too practical, and its frank proclamations of Baltimore's commercial superiority over her more radical sister seaports aroused perceptible displeasure among the more ambitious conventionists. But the coming Memphis and Charleston meetings of 1853 and 1854 promised to be quite amplified, Pan-Southern spectacles, full of flowery and fiery phrases, visionary schemes and resolutions. The numerous subjects to be discussed at Memphis were: the establishment of a continental depot of cotton in opposition to Liverpool, the direct exportation of cotton by the planters—thus doing away with the middleman, middle warehouses, middle commissions, middle insurances, and all that interminable medium which was eating up Southern substance and concentrating Southern exports at Liverpool; to build up a Southern importing market in opposition to New York; to establish through a railroad alliance, more sympathy with the great West and Northwest, socially, commercially and nationally; to have one or more lines of steamers to Europe; to induce immigration through Southern ports to pass the West by a communication always open, expeditious and cheap, or to settle on the fertile lands of the South; to stimulate manufactures and general industry; to educate their children at home; to spend their wealth at home; and to aim at commercial and industrial independence.[1]

A memorable effect would be produced by the meeting, thought some; others were in doubt as to whether it would prove to be a fire or a fizzle. They wished the delegates all manner of luck, at the same time reminding them that in dealing with economic problems practicable projects were more essential than sentiment.[2] Neither were the conservative editors of the North opposed to the convention. They did not suspect that it was convoked in any spirit of sectional

[1] DeBow's Review, XIV, 524. [2] Baltimore Sun, June 9, 1853.

animosity or of jealousy. One friendly editor believed that establishment of direct steam communication with Europe might prove adverse to Northern interests but that it was an absolute need for the Southern public. The Memphis convention did not aim to build up a rival to injure the North but merely to supply the South with necessary trade and travel facilities. Also that section needed and desired to diversify her occupation, and the meeting could not fail to impart an impetus to this noble ambition. As Americans New Yorkers could not but feel an interest in the success of their Southern brethren and they bade the South God speed. However, there was one feature of the convention which was not praiseworthy though very significant. It was

> that aggressive and defiant element coming from a few who seek to retaliate upon England for their impertinent and officious intermeddling with the domestic affairs of the South. These are planters who have hitherto been too busy to attend to anything else, but who, because of the constant and bitter abuse of the abolitionists, have become aroused and will seek to destroy the monopoly of the cotton trade. The convention as a whole is the first result of the spirit of union and combination now rapidly growing up among the Southerners as a protest and threat against the abolitionists of England and the United States.[3]

The editor of the New York Herald believed the South had the right to make herself safe against the scheme of Northern fanatics and to render their section commercially, financially and socially independent. Though he could not see any immediate practical results from the means the meetings employed, he was of the opinion that their effect would be to put the ball in motion for the future development of Southern power.[4]

At the scheduled time about five hundred delegates arrived, representing the following states: Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Missouri, Mississippi, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia.[5] Governor Foote, of Mississippi, and Senator Daw-

[3] New York Enquirer and Courier, June 7, 1853.
[4] New York Herald, June 16, 1853.
[5] Richmond Enquirer, June 17, 1853.

son, of Georgia, were prominent delegates. The latter was again chosen to preside over the assembly, and on taking his seat made an eloquent talk in which he defined the objects of the convention. They had come to Memphis not as sectional men but as truly Southern and Western citizens to ask for Constitutional rights that belonged to these states, not because of hostile feeling to anyone but merely to advocate immediate action to alleviate the suffering of their people, brought on by the want of a proper development of material resources. The delegates were then told what work was to be done. Commercial improvements for the South and West, agriculture and manufactures were the subjects to be discussed.

> We have met for no unjust, sectional or unconstitutional purpose, in opposition to no geographical interests but to examine into plain and admitted rights. If any seeming sectional antagonism appears, the reply is, that we are members of one family, children of the same mother, only younger than their elders and by one statute of distribution—the Constitution of the United States—entitled to the same rights, and to an equal share of our common heritage.

Their desire was to regulate family intercourse, to transact their own business, and not trouble their sisters or strangers to manage affairs for them. They were here to ascertain how they could best develop their vast resources, and fulfill the duties incumbent upon them, by leaving a rich heritage to their children.

Agriculture demanded the first and most serious discussion. They could then examine the capacity of their highways, their improvement and extent; they must find the cheapest and best means of carrying the surplus products to their consumers; commercial markets ought to be developed on the seaboard. Would not the planter profit by exporting his own products from his own ports? Would he not avoid heavy taxation of intermediate agencies and thereby save a large proportion from the sale of his produce? And would it not be wise to encourage commercial men to import foreign supplies from their own cities? To effect all this their inland transportation must be facilitated and the general

government should be asked to assist in removing all obstructions to navigation at the mouth of the Mississippi river and in the other important harbors of the South. Mail facilities and immigration to Southern ports should be encouraged, a line of steamers should be established between these seaports and Europe and South America; and for this purpose they should ask of the general government the same aid granted commercial companies in Northern ports. Finally, the Southern people must be stimulated to invest in manufactures, to produce a division of labor, to encourage agriculture, to increase their population; and thus remove present dependence on other states and nations. They ought to keep their wealth at home to beautify their dwellings and watering places, erect school houses, academies, colleges, universities and churches, and establish a sympathetic press. Above all, the chairman called on the South to unite in constructing the great Pacific railroad.[6]

After Mr. Dawson's address, a general business committee, of which Hamilton Smith of Indiana was chairman, reported that they had under consideration the question of direct trade; the construction of a railway from the Mississippi river to the Pacific; opening up commerce with the valley of the Amazon; the removal of obstructions impeding the navigation of the Mississippi river and the improvement of harbors; the consummation of the negotiations with reference to the Tehuantepec route across the Isthmus; the encouragement of manufactures and mechanic arts, and kindred questions tending to develop the resources of the South and West. The committee then recommended that the convention strongly urge upon Congress prompt and liberal action upon these subjects and to earnestly request the senators and representatives in Congress from the states represented in the convention to use their best efforts to procure at an early day the necessary appropriations for their accomplishment. A Federal board of engineers, according to the committee, having made a report showing the entire practicability of improv-

[6] Journal of Proceedings, pp. 3-6.

ing the harbors of Charleston, Savannah, Mobile, Baltimore and Richmond, without involving according to their estimates any very large outlay of money, Congress ought to be speedily informed of such meritorious claims upon the United States. To the above list of needy Southern ports were later added Galveston, Norfolk, and Wilmington. Mr. J. N. Davis, of Mississippi, wanted the resolution to include all important Southern ports from Maryland to Texas, and he also asked for the improvement of all important interior rivers. But this substitute was not accepted.[7]

The Pacific railroad project brought forth some discussion. The general committee reported the resolution that the road be located on that route "which scientific exploration shall show combines in the greatest degree, the advantages of genial climate, fertility of soil, cheapness of construction, and accessibility at all seasons from all portions of the Union." It was considered right, expedient and proper that the general government should make large donations of public lands to the different states bordering on either side of the Mississippi river, to enable all sections of the Union to connect themselves with the main trunk.

Mr. J. T. Trezevant, of Memphis, described the project as a national necessity, and it was therefore the duty of the general government itself to build one main trunk; and it should also provide by liberal grants of the public lands for the construction of branches of this railroad, starting from its eastern terminus and running to Dubuque, St. Louis, Memphis, Vicksburg, New Orleans, and Galveston, or Indianola, Texas. Gen. Quitman, of Mississippi, objected to the government being asked to build the main line, as this would increase Federal patronage. The Hon. John Bell disagreed with Mr. Quitman, declaring that national necessity implies union, protection, and defense, and that this legitimately calls for direct appropriation from the treasury. After a brief debate it was decided not to ask the Federal Government to construct the main trunk.

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[7] Ibid., p. 15.

There were two letters on this subject. One from Capt. R. B. Marcy suggested that the convention recommend the Pacific railroad to be located upon the most central, direct, and feasible route; that topography and general physical geography of the country along the route must influence the determination, avoiding lines obstructed by deep snows, and that they follow the views and interests of the greatest number of citizens. Another letter from Lieut. M. F. Maury was on the history and importance of the movement to connect the two oceans. The writer believed that the route from Memphis was the best, because it offered the most central terminus for the states east of the Mississippi, and St. Louis for the states west. Railroads, he regarded as being just as valuable and as useful means of national defense as fortifications and navy yards, and if the government did not undertake the work directly it ought to afford Arkansas and Missouri aid in money or lands.[8]

The Tehuantepec railroad enterprise was next considered. The general committee offered a resolution recommending such a project as being of great interest to the whole Union and of particular importance to the Southern and Western states, because of its great practicability, the facility and cheapness of its construction, as well as the short time required for its construction, thus affording to the commerce and travel of not only the United States but the world, a cheap and easy access to the Pacific coast. This being the case, Southern representatives in Congress were requested to press upon the government the necessity of bringing to a favorable termination as soon as possible, the negotiations pending in regard to the right of way across said isthmus, and that they also be instructed to maintain, by all legitimate Constitutional means, the rights of American citizens in the grants made by the Mexican Government.

The Tehuantepec scheme was attacked by Mr. Kasson, of Missouri, as one tending to place under the exclusive influence and control of the Northern cities a commerce the South was

[8] Ibid., p. 34.

seeking to establish with Asia; and also, most likely to injure the great Pacific railroad enterprise. Mr. Bemiss, of Louisiana, advocated the Tehuantepec project, claiming for it the merit of being the shortest and cheapest route to the Pacific, and the one likely to be completed soonest. Even after the construction of the Pacific railroad it would be the route for all heavy and bulky articles of commerce. Senator Dawson approved the resolution believing that if the Tehuantepec railroad should compete with any other route, they were not here to oppose it on that account. They should rather incite each section of the unsurpassed South and West to a generous spirited rivalry. The Missouri delegates alone opposed the resolution, and it was adopted.[9]

Another preeminently national subject before the convention was that of the navigation of rivers in South America. The committee asked the assembly to approve of the steps taken by the United States Government to obtain the fullest information in respect to the countries bounding the Orinoco, Amazon, and La Plata rivers with a view to opening up the trade of that vast region to American enterprise, and that the delegates request their respective senators and representatives in Congress to use all proper means, by establishing mail steamers from the port of New Orleans to suitable points on the South American continent, (or in such other mode as might be deemed most expedient) to secure to the people of the United States the advantages of trade and intercourse with the regions referred to. The resolution received unanimous approval.[10]

Lieut. Maury in a letter to the convention offered the result of his years of study of the Amazon and its water shed. The Amazon country, its resources and possibilities, were described in detail and Americans were urged to go there and develop its resources. He proposed that the South lay the foundations of direct trade and close commercial relation with Brazil and the Atlantic side of South America generally, and with the Amazon in particular. The establishment of

[9] Ibid., pp. 16, 19, 20.

[10] DeBow's Review, XV, 264.

a line of mail steamers between Para at the mouth of that river and Norfolk or Charleston or some other Atlantic port of the Southern States was recommended; and the navigation of the Amazon should be free. Trade with Brazil was most valuable, for her coffee was much used in the Mississippi valley, while she in turn was the great consumer of the prodductions of the states represented in the convention. As a corner stone for a great direct trade, Mr. Maury recommended the establishment of a more direct route for mail and passenger steamers to displace the existing roundabout communication with Brazil.

The upper waters of the Amazon, continued the letter, were owned by the small republics, the lower by the Empire of Brazil. Some of those republics had thrown their ports open to the world and had invited all nations to come and trade with them, while Brazil was keeping them closed tight. It was not advisable to force it open, but diplomatic suasion should be tried, for above all things they should cultivate peaceful and friendly relations with the nations of that continent. The sources of human happiness and prosperity of the United States were external as well as internal. While they were looking to the Pacific, to Japan, to China, to Australia, to the islands of the Pacific, to attract their ships and to court friendly alliances, let them not forget the things that were close under their feet—the dazzling possibilities of the Amazon and the Atlantic slopes of South America.[11]

Bishop Otey, of Tennessee, advocated closer relations with South America. He believed that the interests of commerce, the cause of civilization, as well as the mandate of high heaven required the Atlantic coast of that continent to be subdued and replenished. Free navigation of the Amazon and exploration of the adjacent regions were of interest to all peoples. Southern men should enlarge the sphere of human knowledge, open new sources of wealth to commercial enterprise, promote the elevation of moral character and extend the

[11] Journal of Proceedings, p. 43.

blessings of civilization. Their actions should always be guided by the spirit of general utility and mutual advantage.

A detailed description of the Amazon valley emphasized its great fertility and resourcefulness, its abundant and various productions; a land teeming with the rich bounties of nature—fruits, precious ores, animals and forests, a most glorious opportunity for profit and more than enough to stimulate the enterprise and excite the cupidity of the great Yankee nation. That goodly land so favored by God must be reclaimed and recruited, not by treaty, not by settlement, and not by conquest. They proposed, merely to subdue forests, not men; open channels for commerce, not roads to kingdoms; to confer blessings, not to wrest privileges from fellow men; to elevate man, in his social, political and normal state, not to degrade him. The Amazonian territory was an excellent field for the operation of commerce and all the business of life and was best adapted to the enterprising character of Anglo-Saxons. Like the valley of the Mississippi of thirty years ago that vast region called for healthy, energetic action to develop its natural resources and to stimulate the industry of its inhabitants, to sublimate their views in regard to government, laws, religion. To confer these incalculable benefits on a wealthy wilderness they only asked that the Federal government procure for them the privilege of going their with their steamers, with their capital invested in the industry, skill and enterprise of their countrymen.[12]

In order to remove the cotton monopoly enjoyed by Liverpool, the convention proposed a planter combine and a continental depot for their great staple. It was also resolved to request Southern representatives in Congress to consider the propriety of bringing before the administration the importance of making the cotton interest a subject of instruction to American foreign commercial and diplomatic agents.[13]

When the news of the convention and its aims regarding

[12] Ibid., p. 24.
This speech was later translated and published in South America by the authority of the Government of Peru. (Journal of Proceedings, Charleston Convention, 1854, p. 118.)
[13] Richmond Enquirer, June 18, 1853.

the cotton situation reached England a writer in the London Economist described the movement as "pitiable but not inexplicable" and reminiscent of exploded errors of Old European communities.

> The notion of making trade flourish by regulations and of enriching individuals and nations by monopolies to extort something from somebody else is given up in Europe—except amongst workmen, who combine and strike just like the Memphis conventionists, and amongst the statesmen of the Czar whose country is yet too barbarous to be able to appreciate any kind of freedom. The explanation of such opinions being still cherished in the States, in Russia and amongst ignorant workmen is, that all of them are in much the same stage of civilization.

Lack of intellectual communication caused the rulers of Russia to be arbitrary, operators to strike and the Southern planters to combine. Regulations would not influence the seasons nor make men industrious. According to the English economist slave-raised produce was low in price because the planters were under great necessity to sell in order to maintain their slaves. As long as the planters were bound to their own slaves they could not become masters of the market; and meeting in convention at Memphis would not lessen their dependence on the capitalists of New York and Liverpool. The conventions were termed slave owners' projects against free trade and foolish attempts to regulate natural laws of commerce. They were futile desires to turn trade from its course and were destined to fail just as were the endeavors of the late Napoleon Bonaparte.[14]

Mr. Debow, of New Orleans, ever hopeful of conventional success answered the English economist, reminding him that trade had been often turned from its course in the past. Venice and Portugal and Holland at one time received the trade of the East Indies until the United Company of English Merchants in the seventeenth century turned it from its channel. Napoleon, it is true, had failed to do it, but he just lacked adequate power for that purpose.[15]

Other resolutions were passed by the convention. 1. A

[14] Quoted in DeBow's Review, XV, 346.
[15] Ibid.

necessary feature in the commercial independence of the South and West was the establishment of a direct communication by steam between Southern ports and Europe, and the encouragement and protection of this system by the national government who, it was declared, ought to connect ample mail facilities therewith. 2. The governors and legislators of every Southern state should be impressed with the importance and need of high normal schools for the free admission of such persons, both male and female, as may wish to promote themselves to the profession of teaching within their borders. 3. The people and the Congress of the United States should be informed by a committee of five, on the topics embraced in the action of this convention, and their attention should be invoked to carefully consider its proceedings and desires. 4. The convention earnestly recommended to the citizens of the Southern States to educate their youth at home as far as practicable, to employ native teachers in their schools and colleges; encourage a home press, the publication of books adapted to their particular educational wants and social conditions; encourage and support Southern inventions and discoveries in the arts and sciences. 5. Another committee of five was appointed to prepare for publication and distribution particularly in the manufacturing districts of Europe, a full report of the peculiar facilities offered by the Southern and Western States for the manufacture of cotton goods and tobacco. 6. Congress was recommended to send a corps of competent engineers and hydrographers to investigate the laws and phenomena which govern the Mississippi and its tributaries, to devise the best means of improving the navigation of these rivers, and of protecting their lands from overflow.[16]

The following proposals were offered but were not favorably received by the assembly: 1. Dr. Merrill, of Memphis, wanted the convention to request the Southern legislatures to adopt a system of free common school education. 2. Mr. Bishop, of Arkansas, believed that in view of the immense foreign

[16] Journal of Proceedings, pp. 16-23.

immigration to this country, the convention should suggest the propriety of obtaining all territory adjacent or contiguous to the United States, by treaty, negotiation or purchase, at not too great a cost, as early as possible. Also that the government ought to purchase from the Cherokee nation 800,000 acres of land, and ought to propose to the Cherokees, Choctaws, and Creeks, admission into the American Union as territories or states, and that each native Indian be granted 160 acres of land. 3. Mr. J. S. Thrasher from Louisiana, introduced a resolution deeming the acquisition of Cuba important to the proper protection of the great and constantly increasing commerce in and about that island and Southern Florida, and urged its consideration upon the people and government as a question of national necessity and national supremacy. In voting on this matter, the delegations from Georgia, Mississippi, Alabama, and Tennessee, declared the resolution highly impolitic for the occasion and the subject was unanimously discarded. The Louisiana delegates, however, refrained from voting.[17]

The personnel of the two committees referred to above were as follows: The committee to address Congress and the people consisted of J. T. Trezevant, Memphis; L. M. Kennett, St. Louis; N. D. Coleman, Vicksburg; J. P. Scriven, Savannah; T. P. Bemiss, New Orleans. The committee on the manufacture of cotton was composed of Hamilton Smith, Indiana; S. D. Morgan, Nashville; William Gregg, Charleston; C. G. Baylor, Washington City; and A. Fowler, Little Rock.

The address of the first committee dealt with the several subjects discussed at the convention. First, the urgent and immediate wants of the South and West and of the whole Union was the deepening of the mouth of the Mississippi. If the government might erect costly forts and lighthouses on the seaboard was it not likewise her duty to aid the Western people in saving property from destruction and so lighten the burdens of commerce on the "inland sea"? Facts were pro-

[17] Ibid., pp. 22, 23.

duced to show how unfair Federal disbursements had been in the past. From 1806 to 1845 about $17,000,000 had been expended in improvements upon the seaboard, lakes, and rivers. Of this sum about $6,000,000 had been expended on the lakes and Western rivers, each receiving about the same amount. Since 1845 this equality of expenditure had probably been continued; yet, in 1848 the export and import commerce of the Lakes was $93,000,000, that of Western rivers, $256,000,000. A large majority of the export wealth of the Union floated down through the mouth of the Mississippi, and its protection was a matter of interest to the nation at large, yet this commerce had had no more money expended in its protection than had the lake commerce, though it was more than three times as great. The following table gives an approximate idea of the value of the exports of the Northern and Southern States during several consecutive years, to wit:

Year	*Northern exports*	*Southern exports*
1846	$27,000,000	$74,000,000
1847	48,000,000	102,000,000
1848	34,000,000	98,000,000
1849	32,000,000	99,000,000
1850	32,000,000	104,000,000
1851	39,000,000	110,000,000

A large portion of the exports of the Southern States passed through the mouth of the Mississippi. In 1851-1852 New York exports amounted to $39,000,000 and New Orleans, $43,000,000. In 1852-1853 the amounts increased to 49 and 65 millions respectively. With this vast and rapidly rising commerce floating on the Mississippi waters, wasn't this river entitled to the protection of the government? This immense export wealth should have its share of imports but as long as the mouth of the Mississippi and the harbors on the Atlantic and Gulf coast were obstructed, just so long would the imports purchased by these exports, seek those inlets which were accessible to the largest and fastest sailing vessels. If the government would take prompt and efficient steps to deepen the mouth of the great river, by giving finan-

cial aid she could render it navigable for the largest class of merchant vessel. It would be simple justice to a third of the people of the Union, whose commerce was burdened and endangered.

The second subject discussed by the committee was the Pacific railroad project. This was regarded as too grand in conception, too varied in interest, and too gigantic in construction to be anything but a national undertaking. In the event of a war with a great maritime power, or should the existing mode of crossing the Isthmus be closed, the Pacific possessions would be further from the United States than Europe and would be soon lost. For assistance by sea would be unavailable because of insufficient naval force, and by the land route aid would be too late in arriving. Thus from a military point of view the national importance of the railroad could not be doubted. It was also demanded by the individual and commercial interests and relations that existed between the California and Atlantic coasts. It would serve as a protection for frontier settlements against Indian depredations, and it would render mail service more efficient. Revenues from freight alone could keep the road in repair and pay all incidental expenses. The national legislature was obligated to adopt prompt and efficient steps for the speedy construction of the Pacific railroad. As to location the committee was indefinite, expressing the desire that the government consult the general good and meet the approbation of all reasonable men from Iowa to Texas.

The third proposition and one that had assumed national importance by treaty negotiation was the Tehuantepec enterprise. This route, the committee believed, would be used for transportation of heavy and bulky articles of freight, and would be to the water what the Pacific railroad would be to the land transit. Fourth, direct steam communication between Europe and Southern ports was a matter of moment to the people of the Southern States and the measure eminently merited the consideration of Congress. Fifth, cotton and tobacco, being the most valuable exports of the South and of the Union, something ought to be done to increase

their consumption in foreign nations, to augment their prices and to stimulate production.

In conclusion, the Southern people were told that the convention was unanimous on the importance of establishing in their midst, literary and scientific institutions of the highest grade, and of educating their children at home. They were annually paying Northern and Eastern States a voluntary tribute of millions, in the form of mental vassalage. They were too much inclined or accustomed to think that no education was complete unless it was obtained at Northern schools, no literature worth examination and encouragement unless it was found in Northern periodicals; no watering places healthful or fashionable unless they were fanned by Northern breezes. The thousands of dollars annually expended by the citizens of the South in educating their children at Northern schools, would establish and support institutions of the highest order at home. Such schools would command the admiration and receive the fostering aid of their own citizens. Their children thus educated in the South would imbibe sentiments and opinions congenial to Southern habits of life, and a literature would soon spring up among them, worthy of the emulation of any people in the universe. Let them lavish on their own beautiful hilltops and delightful valleys the wealth they annually squandered elsewhere, and learn to find at home the enjoyments so long sought abroad. In doing this they would be unjust to no one, and true to themselves.[18]

The Memphis convention thus came to an end, but it offered the occasion for much editorial comment. The Herald of New York had sent a special reporter to the meeting and devoted twelve columns to its proceedings. All the important measures were deemed desirable—improvement of rivers, railroads, common schools, cotton factories and continental depots; but in carrying out their projects the Southern States were requested to remember that the interests of the whole country should always be paramount.[19] The gathering at Memphis was a large and highly respectable body and its

[18] Ibid., pp. 55-64.

[19] New York Herald, June 23, 1853.

proceedings were eminently temperate and judicious, said another Northern writer.[20] Foolish, impractical, futile windbags, was the opinion of the New York Tribune. And this editor continued:

> The great overwhelming delusion of the South consists in the belief that wealth comes mainly of foreign commerce, and provided that roads can be made to the seaboard, and ships and steamers ply them to lands thousands of miles distant, all classes, save human chattels must be enriched. . . . The conventions are regulated by the idea that it is only necessary to trade directly with Europe to grow rich. . . . The South writhes and groans, and meets in convention and dreams of making a New York out of Charleston, or Savannah, or Norfolk in one breath and in the next of cutting down timber and making settlements under the equator on the Amazon river. These foolish conventions have thus far only shown that tropical eloquence is not cool reason or scientific deduction; and that the more Southerners so meet together, the further off will they be from the truth. They are now going the wrong road, and these conventions only confirm their conceit. An additional platform for that greatest of nuisances, Southern "great men" is afforded by these tawdry gatherings; where every reference to human right and economical science is ignored. . . .
>
> They are mere talk. Trade will go where there is the most capital, and there can not be the most capital in a slave state. It was tried in New Orleans, and New Orleans is pretty much at a standstill. It was tried in Charleston, and Charleston is a tenth rate city in size. It was tried in Norfolk, and Norfolk is a village. The laws which draw capital to New York, to Philadelphia, to Boston, as the great Atlantic commercial cities are as old as the universe and as sure as sunrise. These States have a back country of freemen. Notwithstanding the cotton press and the cotton merchants and all the army of dough faces, they are nurtured by the sturdy agriculture of the interior. The cotton crop upon which the South supposes the world turns, is after all a mighty small affair.

What if Southern exports were three times as much as Northern, asked the editor of the Tribune. What did it all amount to? All the profits when summed up was only an insignificant total. It was all a mighty pother about a pitifully small sum. There was in the North a whole catalogue of staples, each of which was more valuable than the cotton crop. To exalt and to attach such national importance to one staple was simply preposterous and contemptible. If foreign trade were totally stopped the South would be bankrupt, for it was weak and dependent on cotton alone; but the North with its vast power of diversified industry would rise

[20] Harper's Monthly Magazine, VII, 411.

to the occasion and save the whole country from utter ruin. To become rich, a state must have a varied home industry, arts and manufactures disseminated among a dense agricultural population. Foreign commerce is merely subsidiary, and it was extreme folly for the South to think that by establishing direct trade with Europe she could gain substantial power and independence.

The writer then looked down with pity upon the condition of the South as illustrated by windy, baseless, blighted harangues of these conventions, and he thought it was most melancholy that such folly and delusion should prevail.

> It is much like the gibberings of a madhouse—where one poor creature fancies himself a god, wondering where are his worshippers. So these orators will have it that they are kings and gods; all they want is subjects and worshippers in the wealth and industry and enterprise which gives the North industrial and commercial supremacy. And so we fear they will gibber at the next convention and so at the next, and the next.

Gentle and impatient readers were however given the consoling assurance that even deluded conventions must eventually come to an end. Then the article concluded: If the cotton states would someday become as prosperous as the North—and it was hoped they would—they should look, not to commercial conventions but to honest work, enterprise, economy and common schools.[21]

Nor was the South unanimous in its applause. One writer observed that the Memphis convention had adopted a series of harmonious resolutions and remarked, "so far, so good." But something more than a declaration of purpose and wishes was necessary to accomplish their objects. Resolutions, speeches and reports could produce no immediate influence upon public affairs unless accompanied by organization and action, strengthened by cordial concert and followed by continual personal effort. The Pacific railroad, the Tehuantepec railroad, the Amazon, Southern education, steamers, manufactures, noted the writer, were matters in which there was general concurrence of sentiment, but he could not look with any sanguine expectations on the convention's method of

[21] New York Tribune, March 7, 1854.

effecting these projects. When conflicting interests were represented at a meeting the competitors could agree only on a general plan. They might resolve in favor of direct trade from Southern ports but they could not exclude specific ports, nor name any. An Atlantic cotton depot was needed for the Southwest, but just where was it to be? And what Southern State would not like to have a university of its own? The Tehuantepec route was the only measure which was national and agreeable to all. The convention advised that the Pacific railroad be built on the best route as soon as the government should have ascertained which was the best. Was there anything new or definite in this resolve? A proposition brought up at Memphis declaring that the road be made on a central line was too definite and liable to commit the convention and so it was lost. In short, the temper of the meeting was to do nothing which would bring into conflict the material interests and variant opinions of the delegates, and the result, in regard to the Pacific railroad at least, was a suggestion of nothing but that a road be made on the best location, a proposition which needed no recommendation at Memphis.[22]

Animadversion notwithstanding, Mr. DeBow still had faith that the convention would have favorable results, and he strongly urged that the organization be preserved and perpetuated, and its discussions continue until the desired fruits be reaped. As an association for the promotion of the great industrial interests of the Southern States, he said, the convention with its annual meetings at various places would become the great center of the economic interests of this region. The good to be effected was inestimable; for the best minds of the cotton kingdom would be centered on these meetings, and he advocated a permanent session of committees who should collect extensive information to be distributed to everyone interested. The convention, DeBow believed, was the most powerful agency that could be devised.[23] And there must have been many people in the South who agreed with the editor, for the most eloquent, verbose, and spectacular of commercial conventions was yet to occur.

[22] New Orleans Picayune, June 10, 1853.
[23] DeBow's Review, XV, 254.

CHAPTER VII

The Convention in Full Bloom

In April 1854, the city of Charleston was showing signs of unusual animation, preparing the stage for a grand display in which many celebrated Southerners were to take part. A commercial convention was in the offing and the guests must be warmly welcomed. Delegates were allowed half fare on some Southern railroads, and others granted free passage. All the hotels were soon filled. The citizens of Charleston made many plans for the amusement of the visitors. There were to be special theatrics, balls, banquets, concerts, regattas, excursions, sight seeing, et cetera.

The convention began at the scheduled time. Thirteen states were represented: Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Florida, Georgia, Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, Arkansas, Tennessee, Kentucky, and Missouri. William C. Dawson was again elected to preside, Lieut. Maury was first vice-president, and W. G. DeSaussure, secretary.[1]

Mr. Dawson made the opening address. He considered the convention as representing the great interests of an immense section of the country, not in conflict with any other portion but merely seeking the commercial elevation of the South. They did not array themselves in antagonism to any part of the Union, he said, but only purposed to unite, to harmonize, to converse and interchange friendly sentiments and opinions with each other, to find ways and means of developing their vast resources.

They of the South had been for years engaged in a very prosperous agriculture with a happy and glorious career. All their capital went into agricultural pursuits. They left the sea, abandoned commerce and let their carrying trade slip from them into the hands of others. But now the time had come for change. Labor had increased in their section and

[1] Charleston Courier, April 3-10, 1854. Baltimore Sun, April 13, 1854. New York Tribune, April 15, 1854.

their growing population demanded diversity of employment, and their capital a diversity of investment. They had been supplying the world with its necessaries of life and material for clothing but the fruits of their labor had always been for someone else. They were assembled here to consider how they could protect their interests and control their own prosperity. They must export and import with their own ships and in their own ports and retain the proceeds of their labor among themselves. The laws of trade, the laws of nature, God never intended that Southern shores should be dependent on any other portion of the country for the means of communication with foreign lands. It was their patriotic duty to conquer the indolence and carelessness prevalent among many of them. They must acquire the Yankee energy, industry and perseverance if they hoped to enjoy the fruits of their own labor.

These were the matters they must study. They must get rid of excessive taxes, improve their ports, and build railroads and canals. The Pacific railroad was indispensable and needed to bind the people more firmly together; a railroad across the isthmus at Tehuantepec was of utmost importance; the great rivers of the South American continent should be opened. Let them ask the support of the general government in the establishment of a line of steamers from Southern ports to Europe. Their manufacturing interests should also claim attention; for they were exhausting their soil, and burning their timber, leaving no resources for the future. To avert the calamity that threatened them they must divide their labor; go to the mountains and develop their hidden wealth, see after their iron, gold and copper, build factories. They should not forget the trade of the Mississippi valley, and let them make New Orleans the New York of the South. A period had arrived in the history of the cotton growing states when a division of labor had become necessary. "We have been planted here by destiny; we have institutions in the establishment of which we had no control; we have them from our ancestors, and like the trees of the forest they are rooted

into our very soil, so that they cannot be torn up without involving them in destruction". Mr. Dawson said he feared nothing upon this great question; and did not raise it for political, sectional or any other purpose, yet it was well that they uphold their institutions. To this end they should educate their children to love and to defend the traditions of their fathers.[2]

A letter from Mr. DeBow was read to the assembly. The conventions, wrote the editor of the celebrated Review, originated when other sections of the Union interfered in the policy and institutions of the South. Later they convened for purely industrial reasons and contributed largely to that great development which had been exhibited throughout the South in the last eight years. Railroads were extended, commerce and manufactures had been enlarged and diversified, agriculture stimulated; population was becoming more concentrated, leading to new combinations and higher hopes upon the conviction that they might yet vindicate their rights and position in the Union. The conventions had opened the eyes of the South to see and feel her vassalage even in matters not of a material character: reading, learning, or admiring only what might be found in Northern books, periodicals and newspapers, schools and colleges. In trade, manufacture, education and travel they had been paying an annual tribute of 100,000,000 dollars, all of which should have accumulated in their midst.

The letter then recalled the early conventions of 1838-1839, "consecrated by the presence and co-operating action of the Harpers and Haynes, McDuffies, and Elmores, over whose ashes the best tears of the South have been shed. Could those noble patriots return from their graves and visit us today, how their hearts would swell with pride at the spectacle which is exhibited." But they had only begun and there was much to be done. The convention should examine the subject of deepening of the passes at the mouth of the Mississippi, the reduction for a period of time or the entire abrogation of

[2] Journal of Proceedings, pp. 9-14.

duties upon railroad iron, and the adoption of the policy by the Federal Government of granting alternate sections of the public domain for railroad building.[3]

Freeman Hunt, editor and proprietor of Hunt's Merchants Magazine wrote that it would afford him pleasure to do anything in his power through the pages of his paper to promote the objects of the convention. He believed that the commercial, industrial and social prosperity of the Union depended, in a great measure, upon the decentralization of trade—its distribution throughout the country. He hoped and trusted that New York would never become to the United States what Paris was to France, or what London was, in a great measure, to the British Isles. The pages of his journal, concluded Mr. Hunt, would ever be open to papers calculated to promote the objects of the convention, and would always be happy to receive communications from any of its members.[4]

Mr. C. K. Marshall, of Mississippi, spoke on the objects of the assembly, declaring that the convention regarded commerce as the great colonizer, civilizer, and christianizer of mankind, and that subject therefore demanded special consideration. But it must also be recognized that the general design of the meeting embraced education, home manufactures, navigation and the occupation of their vast uncultivated regions. He wished to define the position of the convention before the world. The idea had gone abroad that their labors were confined to the interests of trade alone, but that was an erroneous position, for everything that was of practical interest was to be discussed. The great work of education was a matter of vital importance to their section of the Union and must not be neglected. Why, the South purchased thousands and hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of school books each year—books printed and published in other sections of the country, not well adapted to Southern latitudes, nor always teaching the doctrines of philanthropy and Providence on which they rested for their support, defence and responsibility. Every delegate had his favorite

[3] Ibid., p. 21.

[4] Ibid., p. 104.

scheme, the merchant, the manufacturer, the navigator, the railroad man, and Mr. Marshall wished them all God speed. But it must be remembered, he said, that after the forests would be inhabited and

> thousands of our population shall pass on to sunset, what provisions shall they find made for the necessities that will press upon them. Sir, every bar of railroad iron laid westward is pregnant with at least as large a family as that contained in Noah's Ark. And when these forest homes are established we want their hearths cheered and illuminated with the periodicals of our presses, and the field schools, the colleges and the universities taught from standard works produced by our own authors, philosophers and printers.[5]

The most prominent place on the program was given to the question of the Pacific railroad. Albert Pike, of Arkansas, as chairman of the Pacific railroad committee, offered a plan which proposed the organization of Southern states into a corporation chartered by any one of them and of which each was to be a stockholder, for the purpose of building the road. Such a union of states, the committee believed, was the most practicable, cheapest and ideal method of accomplishing the laudable object—"to bind California to the South with hooks of steel," and at the same time make separation an incalculable loss to the North,—thus rendering a dissolution of the Union impossible.

Among many other things it was said that the plan aimed to demonstrate to the North that the Southern States could unite themselves together strictly within the Constitution, for legitimate, peaceful and laudable purposes, calculated to increase their wealth, prosperity and power. Only by perfect harmony and concert of action among themselves could the Southern States maintain their just rights and their dignity in the Union. The Constitution forbade their forming any political league or compact among themselves, but there was no clause prohibiting an economic alliance, and this latter object was what they had in view. If the South were powerful and united, she could hold the balance of power, remain secure and inviolate. The Pacific railroad would

[5] Ibid., pp. 15, 51.

give her commercial and political power. Commerce was king and whoever controlled the highways of trade would control the legislation of the land, would give shape and color to the foreign policy, extend aid to workers of internal improvement, grant bounties to shipping interests, control the acquisition of new territory and create new states. They must checkmate the North and her foreign voters by building the Pacific railroad and this could only be done by an association of the Southern States. The idea of disunion must not become familiar, but it was quite evident that the chances of it were by no means diminishing, and sagacious statesmen must provide for all emergencies. Much as they needed a Southern railroad to the Pacific now, it would be absolutely and literally indispensable if the North and South were to separate; for how else could they maintain a foothold upon the Pacific coast.

The proponents of Pike's plan were satisfied that the Pacific railroad could neither be built nor ought to be built by the general government. Federal control over the commerce of the country, such as that road would give, would wipe out all the state sovereignty that existed, for the legitimate powers of that government were already quite large enough for the welfare and security of the Southern States. And even if Congress had the Constitutional power to build the road, as a military road or otherwise, it could not exercise that power, because the Southern statesmen would always prevent the construction of the road by opposing the necessary appropriations from the treasury of the United States. If it were practicable the road should, in their opinion, be built by and belong to the states as partners and in this way avert both governmental and corporation monopoly. The South wanted the road and should build it herself, declared Mr. Pike. The general government would give no substantial aid and it was even unmanly to beseech such aid. Let a corporation be organized. Let them make the states interested as stockholders, as far as practicable, and the residue of the stock be taken by cities, counties, the Indian nations upon

the frontier, corporations, and individuals in the South and elsewhere. There was no reason why such a company could not be formed under a charter granted by a Southern state. There was no reason why one hundred million dollars could not be raised from the united wealth of the Southern States and people. And capitalists in the North and elsewhere would gladly embark their money in this great enterprise under such a charter, as under one granted by the legislature of New York. The South Carolina legislature was solicited to act on the draft entitled "A Bill to Create and Incorporate the Southern Pacific Railroad Company". The legislatures of the other Southern States and the councils of the Cherokee, Creek, and Choctaw nations were to be earnestly and urgently solicited to recognize the company and to invest it with certain powers, immunities and privileges. Every Southern state, it was asserted, had the ability to become a large stockholder in this company; and they and their people had ample means to build the road. It was the duty of every Southern man to himself and to his children, to his country and to his honor, dignity and self-respect to engage earnestly in this great and indispensable measure for the wealth and security, for the political and economic power of the South.

The proposed plan, however, met with some opposition and there was a long debate abounding in sentimental verbosity and flowery eloquence, emanating mostly from the affirmative. Mr. N. D. Coleman, of Mississippi, disapproving the scheme recommended by the committee, said it was too visionary and impracticable. He also didn't like it because it was a combination of Southern states to the exclusion of the Western states and because the proposition savored of politics. It would be necssary, thought Mr. Coleman, to negotiate with Mexico and the Indian nations, and neither the convention nor any state had the right to negotiate, nor the right to grant such power to the corporation. Furthermore, he didn't believe any one of the fourteen states would enter such an association. The constitutions of Kentucky and Louisiana forbade them from becoming members of such a corporation

and other state constitutions no doubt had similar restrictions; and most of them would refuse to come into the measure upon a question of policy. As an alternative, Mr. Coleman called attention to a charter offered by the state of Louisiana which he thought ample for the purpose.[6]

Mr. T. A. Marshall, of Mississippi, also spoke against the resolution, declaring that no Southern state would undertake such a work, that the people would not submit to the necessary taxation, and that the scheme was entirely too impracticable. Judge Nesbit, of Georgia, did not believe the required subscriptions could be obtained and also doubted the constitutionality of the plan. Lieut. Maury called the proposed project an unlawful scheme. No state could negotiate with Mexico, he said, nor could such a corporation become owners of real estate in a foreign country without legislation by the United States Government. He advocated the propriety of the government making this road at its own cost, to be free to all the people of the United States on payment of the mere cost of the locomotive power.[7]

More speeches followed. Governor J. C. Jones, of Tennessee, removed all constitutional objections to the aid of the government in building the road, and in a long, spirited speech, described the Pacific project as being of vast political importance,—that it would bring the South into a holy and happy communion with their far Western brothers, and declared that without the railroad, sympathies now subsisting would weaken. In his opinion, it was the legitimate scope of the Federal Government to undertake internal improvements whenever such work could not be accomplished by individuals; and in this case he believed the Federal Government ought to aid either by appropriations of money out of the treasury or by the grants of public lands.[8] Mr. Maury thought it was competent, wise and expedient for the general government to construct the Pacific railroad as a measure for the common defense. A double track railway to run from

[6] Ibid., p. 134.
[7] Ibid., pp. 79, 138.
[8] Ibid., pp. 70-79.

the Mississippi river to California was his proposal.[9] The chairman, Senator Dawson of Georgia, advised the assembly to act upon the principles of the Federal Government and to apply to the president and Senate of the United States to make negotiations with Mexico for the route. The only way to get Mexico's assent to the surrender of her soil and her jurisdiction over the right of way, he said, was by the guarantee of a treaty pledged to by the government of the United States. Mexico would never agree to a contract with a corporation, and the road would be stopped because of three hundred miles through Sonora, unless they requested the general government to obtain that guarantee. There was an abundance of capital except for the three hundred miles through Sonora and that could be easily raised. Mr. Dawson believed it could be raised in one week after the right of way was procured, for the connection would be worth millions of dollars to the company who would construct that line.[10] There was still more discussion participated in by Messrs. Tift, of Georgia, Gibbon, of North Carolina, Lyons, of Virginia, Tilghman, of Maryland, Morton, of Georgia, Gen. Gadsden and Governor Clay, of Alabama, and Mr. Polk, of Tennessee.

Mr. Pike, fearing that he had been misunderstood and wrongly regarded as favoring disunion arose to defend himself, as well as the plan devised by his committee. He wished to affirm his belief in the Union with every fibre and nerve, but still believed there was only one way in which the South could remain in the Union and that was by developing her own resources and by putting herself upon an equality with the North. If the South were inferior to the North she would be better out of the Union than in it. (Vociferous applause) The North might have the power to prevent the South from taking slaves where they liked, but had they the right? And the speaker answered they have not, because that would make them inferior to the North, and if that were done the Union was dissolved. (More applause) They must

[9] Ibid., pp. 80-82.

[10] Ibid., p. 140.

be free and independent, and he therefore urged the South to unite and build this road.

> I oppose all schemes for applying to Congress for aid, not because I believe that Congress has not the power, but because I believe that to beg anything from Congress is useless, useless, useless all the time. Sir, the way to save the Union, to make ourselves equal to the North in all respects, is to become independent, not by tearing the national flag asunder and breaking up this glorious union of states, but by commercial freedom. And when we do that we make them fear to violate our just rights, because we are able to maintain them.

(Immense applause) There was a North and a South and there always would be so long as the Union existed. One peculiar institution always excited Northern feeling, but it was foolish to disregard the other facts in operation—considerations of money and economic prosperity.

Northerners wanted the Pacific railroad because it would bring prosperity to their lands, to their cities, and Southerners wanted it for the same reasons. It was not a matter of patriotism but one of material self-interest, said Mr. Pike. The general government would not build the road and if the South was to remain inactive in the matter she would give active co-operation to the North in building a Northern railroad. They must help themselves, for Congress would not. They must get together, not by any unlawful confederation but in a legal union for the purpose of building with their own funds this great Southern highway to the Pacific, dealing as independent states, negotiating, if need be, with Mexico for the land, asking no favors from the Northern States and telling the general government, "If you want your mails carried over our road, you will have to pay us the price we charge, or build a road yourself". (Long continued applause) The emotive Mr. Pike called on his audience to imagine the state of Virginia enacting a law to this effect: "'Be it enacted by the legislature of Virginia that the states of Virginia, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Mississippi, Arkansas, Louisiana, and so on, through all the fourteen states, be incorporated into a body politic for the construction of a Southern Pacific rail-

road'. When would there in all the annals of time, be a more glorious confederation?" (Cheers) It would not be a confederation to carry on war but to turn the commerce of the world across that portion of the country which the Southerners inherited. The gentleman from Arkansas continued to hold forth in this manner for many more minutes. He was frequently interrupted by loud applause and cheers, and was honored with a bouquet of beautiful flowers, presented by the Pee Dee ladies of Charleston.[11]

In answering his critics Mr. Pike asked how the general government was to build the railroad within their constitutional scruples. The government had no power to grant money to construct a road, and grants of land were insufficient. If the road was to be built money must be raised and the question was where and how. His resolution proposed that in order to make provision for the said road the convention should earnestly recommend a Southern organization of as many states as was possible and of different cities and railroad companies and corporations in those Southern states for the purpose of obtaining the right of way, if necessary, from Mexico. He didn't expect all the states to enter but he would have Virginia, the oldest of the Southern states, grant a charter involving a certain amount of capital to build the road. It was not proposed to obtain the ascent of every state, only the charter was granted and then they would proceed to distribute the stock as it might be taken. Mr. Pike disagreed with Senator Dawson on the method of getting the right of way through Mexico. He believed that that country would rather deal with a private company than with the United States government. In conclusion, he made an ardent appeal to the men of the South, and to the inevitable ladies who adorned the gallery, to support the idea of Southern confederation and he referred to it as a sort of declaration of independence on the part of the South.

Another prominent and popular speaker was Gen. Leslie Combs from Kentucky. In his address he wished to assure

[11] Ibid., pp. 142-152.

the public that the convention was uncontaminated with politics and as proof he offered the fact that he, a Whig, had been appointed as a delegate by his governor, who was a Democrat. Mr. Combs asserted that he had no flowers of eloquence to scatter over the convention, no bouquets to present to the bright and beautiful countenances which now graced the boxes. Whereupon there followed a shower of applause and a warm dispatch to the gallant general of sundry and exquisite flowers, a token of appreciation from the said boxes. The speaker then proceeded to describe the rapid and remarkable growth of the American railroads and outlined in detail the proposed Southern routes to the Pacific. He was opposed to government aid and called on the people of the South to carry out the great undertaking. It was vitally important to the prosperity and progress of the United States to have one or more railroads connecting the states on the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. He believed the North would build its own road but that from three to six months in the year they would have to pass over the Southern route, and if both were constructed he would not consider them as rivals. The Southern ought to commence at suitable points on the Mississippi river, between St. Louis and New Orleans, —thus connecting itself with the various similar improvements and joining at some point in Texas on or near the thirty-second parallel of north latitude—thence to the Rio Grande, on the western border of Texas, by the route designated by that state in a recent law chartering the Mississippi, El Paso and Pacific railroad. Two objects would be accomplished by this route. It would run through the center of the slave territory and it would have the benefit of the twenty sections per mile donated by the state of Texas. If San Diego or San Francisco could not be safely reached by this route without passing over foreign territory it was recommended that the president of the United States be respectfully requested to negotiate with the government of Mexico for the right of way.[12]

[12] Ibid, pp. 35, 59.

This brought up the question of the Gadsden treaty. Gen. Gadsden informed the assembly that it was not necessary to appeal to the president for the right of way, since it had already been obtained and that the matter was now up to the Senate to accord. Opposition to the treaty, he said, was due to the fact that it "covers the proper ground for a railway, and acquires an addition of territory, which may encourage Southern emigration and occupancy." Gadsden believed that the corporation proposed by Mr. Pike was neither novel nor unlawful, and might legitimately treat with Mexico if the treaty were finally denied the South. Governor Jones, of Tennessee, said there had been three or four publications of the treaty, all of them of a different character and since its true content was yet unknown he would advise the convention not to recommend its ratification. Nelson Tift and Senator Dawson, of Georgia, also requested the meeting to avoid making the ratification of the Gadsden treaty a subject of action, and cautioned that the matter was too delicate and secret for discussion at that place. A resolution asking for the recommendation to the Senate of the treaty as securing the best route for the proposed Southern Pacific railroad was therefore withdrawn.[13]

The final resolutions on the Pacific railroad as adopted were as follows:

1. It is vitally important to the progress and prosperity of the United States to have one or more railroads connecting the states on the Atlantic with those on the Pacific coast.

2. The Southern route ought to commence at suitable points on the Mississippi river, between New Orleans and St. Louis, thus connecting itself with similar improvements made and contemplated in the Atlantic states, and concentrating at some point in Texas on or near the thirty-second parallel of north latitude—thence to the Rio Grande on the western border of Texas by the route designated by that state at the last session of her legislature chartering the Mississippi, El Paso, and Pacific railroad, and thence to the Pacific ocean, or Gulf of California.

3. In order to make provision for the construction of said road, the convention recommends a Southern organization be effected, if practicable, of the states of Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina,

[13] Ibid., pp. 126, 128.

South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Texas, Arkansas, Missouri, Tennessee, Kentucky, and of the different cities and railroad companies and corporations in those states, for the purpose of building a Southern railroad to the Pacific ocean or Gulf of California, by the route and from one or more of the points indicated in the second of the resolutions—negotiating for the right of way, if necessary with the government of Mexico.

4. Resolved. That to effect this organization, this convention respectfully advises the incorporation, by the legislature of the state of Virginia, of a Southern Pacific railroad company, with a capital sufficient to build such a road from the point or points and by the route indicated in the second resolution—of which corporation the several Southern states above mentioned, the several cities therein shall be invited to be corporators, together with such other companies and individuals as may choose to subscribe for stock including, if they desire it, the Cherokee, Choctaw, and Creek nations of Indians, west of the Mississippi. That said states be invited to take stock in such corporations, to the amount of not less than two million dollars each, to be raised and secured in such manner as the legislature of each state shall direct. That each of said cities and railroad companies be invited to subscribe for stock to such amount as its means will admit. That the existence of said corporation be recognized by each of said states and such powers be vested in and such franchises and capacities granted to it by the legislature of each such state, as may be necessary to effect the object of the organization, and that in its directory, each such state be equally represented.

5. That special sessions of the state legislatures be called, if necessary, to consider this plan. That a committee draft a charter of incorporation for such company, to lay same before the governors of said states and to the national or general councils of the Cherokee, Creek, and Choctaw nations, and ask them to consider the proposed enterprise and to act on the matter. The Indians be requested to grant rights of way and recognize the said company. That they enact laws that shall secure to the South exclusive benefits and advantages of the commerce to the Pacific, and the wealthy provinces of Mexico to be traversed by the railroad.

6. That power be given by the charter to the corporation to negotiate with Mexico for, and purchase, if necessary a right of way through her territory to the Pacific ocean, or to some point on the Gulf of Mexico, promising Mexico the same rate as to American citizens and agreeing to submit to the jurisdiction and laws of Mexico on their land; to agree that the company maintain military posts along said road and to claim no political rights nor to attempt to colonize the country.

7. Work should be started at once and it is the duty of every Southerner to engage earnestly in this great and indispensable measure of security, as well as of wealth, and of political and commercial power to the South.

8. That California be invited to unite in this organization.[14]

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[14] Journal of Proceedings, Appendix, p. xvi.

Southern railroads in general received warm encouragement. The Cincinnati chamber of commerce sent a message to the convention manifesting that city's deep interest in uniting the Ohio with the Southeast by railroads. James Hall and Edward Mansfield, of Cincinnati, regretted their inability to attend the convention and heartily endorsed the plan of railroad connections between Charleston and their city.[15] The convention then decided to promote by all means in their power railroads connecting Southern Atlantic and Gulf ports and all others radiating from these. They viewed with unqualified approbation railroad works penetrating the valley of the Mississippi connecting important points in the West with the seaports of the South Atlantic and Gulf States. The speedy completion of this system of railroads was deemed essential to the full development of the agricultural, mineral, and manufacturing resources of the South and to the control and direction to her own seaports of the great commerce in her productions now carried on by others. At the same time it was eminently calculated to draw closer together the bonds of union amongst themselves and so perpetuate their institutions and society. They emphatically recommended the several states to afford pecuniary aid to the accomplishment of these enterprises. Copies of these resolutions were to be transmitted by the president of the convention to the governors, state legislatures, and to the members of Congress from the states represented at the convention.[16]

Commerce and direct trade also received attention. Mr. George A. Trenholm, of South Carolina, was the first speaker on this subject. He bemoaned the fact that the South had no ships and possessed no commercial marine though the chief materials of ship building—timber, iron, and hemp were in great abundance and her agricultural products afforded the largest and most lucrative carrying trade in the world. They supinely surrendered to others an annual harvest of more than $20,000,000 from this highly profitable and invigorating industry of transportation. Cotton alone paid an annual

[15] Journal of Proceedings, pp. 23, 26, 29.
[16] Ibid., Appendix, xvii.

tribute of $12,000,000 for freight, to say nothing of tobacco, hemp, sugar, flour, etc., and the return cargoes in exchange for these productions. Four hundred ships were employed in transporting the annual cotton crop alone. And yet with the exception of Baltimore, the South was said to be without a single ship. The Northern ports were the home of the ship owners and New York was where they mostly assembled; and hence at that port the freight rates were permanently lower than those of any Southern port.

Loss to shipowners must be the gain of the planters and farmers, believed Mr. Trenholm. And had they possessed their own carrying trade, the profits in a period of prosperity would have been distributed among their own people, and in a season of depression the loss sustained by the shipowners would have redounded to the benefit of the producers for export, and the general good would never suffer. Direct benefits as well as collateral and incidental advantages would result to the South. The residence of the masters and mates and their families and the return from their expenditures, for the pay of the seamen, repairs, outfits, and victualling of the ships; the demand for timber, the establishment of shipyards, the profitable employment of mechanics; all these would be the accruing benefits from ship building and the carrying trade. Mr. Trenholm congratulated New York on her success in this field and closed his remarks by recommending the people of the South and particularly the merchants in seaports to venture a suitable portion of their capital in the construction or purchase of ships, and thus establish a commercial marine for the Southern States.[17]

Diverse suggestions regarding commerce were tendered. Dr. McGimsey, of Louisiana, offered a plan with which the Liverpool cotton monopoly was to be dispelled. The planters were to form an association in their respective counties, parishes, districts and states for the purpose of establishing depots of cotton and other agricultural products. This company was to purchase about fifteen first class ocean steamers

[17] Journal of Proceedings, p. 16.

to do the South's carrying trade. Dr. McGimsey also suggested that the planters get out of debt—a very good piece of advice with which certain creditors no doubt agreed; that they patronize exclusively home merchants and Southern importing cities, and that the South establish forthwith a direct trade with the Gulf, Atlantic and Pacific coasts and with the Eastern hemisphere.[18] Mr. Wilcox, of Tennessee, believed that the United States government ought to make special negotiations with China regarding the introduction of the great American staples—cotton and tobacco.[19] Mr. Morton, of Georgia, requested the convention to deem it expedient and proper that the United States tender mediation to Turkey, England, and France in order to prevent a threatened European war which would be disastrous to the commerce of the world and thereby greatly reduce the value of cotton. Mr. C. K. Marshall, Mississippi, considered the Czar of Russia one of the greatest philanthropists of the age, and he thought the United States Government ought to say to him: "If you cannot rule your people according to our notions, do the best you can, and clothe them in cotton at all events."[20] Mr. Norcross, of Georgia, desired to see the legislatures encourage permanent location of foreign capital and investments in legitimate business in the South.[21] General Tilghman, of Maryland, asked the convention to recommend the legislatures to grant bounties or other benefits and privileges for the encouragement of commerce.[22] Mr. Edmund Ruffin, of Virginia, offered a series of resolutions in which it was resolved that the fishing bounties paid by the government of the United States, and received exclusively by Northern vessels, operated to the increase of Northern shipping while much of the tax thus levied was collected at the expense of the Southern States; also, that the great sums paid by the Federal Government for the maintenance of European mail steamers, were collected principally at the expense of

[18] Ibid., pp. 42, 45.
[19] Ibid., p. 41.
[20] Charleston Courier, April 12, 1854.
[21] Journal, p. 35. [22] Ibid., p. 49.

the Southern States, and that all such discrimination ought to cease.[23] Col. A. P. Hayne, of South Carolina, advocated the opening of the American coasting trade to the enterprise of foreigners, as a reciprocal benefit to Great Britain who had lately upheld the principle of free trade.[24] A letter from J. J. Seibels, an American consul in Belgium, described the advantages of direct trade, and of the city of Antwerp as an entrepôt for Southern produce, and wished the convention success in its projects.[25]

Anent Southern commerce it was finally agreed to recommend: 1. That every Southern state having a seaport encourage the establishment of a direct trade with Europe, either by exempting from taxes, for a limited time, the goods imported, or by allowing the importers an equivalent drawback or bounty, or by such other mode as the legislature of the respective state might deem best. 2. That a committee, consisting of two members from each seaport represented in the convention be appointed for the purpose of inquiring into the expediency of establishing a line of steamships between one or more of said ports and certain port or ports in Europe, with liberty to act during the recess of the convention to carry into prompt execution such scheme, having the above object in view, as might be agreed to. 3. That the Southern delegation in Congress be requested to urge the passage of an act authorizing the transportation of the United States mail in said steamships, with such compensation as had heretofore been allowed other similar steam lines.[26]

To talk about Southern relations with South America and the Amazon valley was one of the express objects of the convention. Lieutenants William L. Herndon, the explorer, and M. F. Maury, of the National Observatory, were the leading advocates of closer connections with that continent. Mr. Herndon wanted the government of Brazil to permit Southern vessels to make explorations and surveys on the shores of the Amazon belonging to that nation. Mr. Lyons, of Vir-

[23] Ibid., p. 57.
[24] Ibid., p. 54.
[25] Ibid., p. 85.
[26] Journal Appendix, p. xix.

ginia, thought this proposition involved a serious diplomatic question. The navigation of the Amazon was for Brazil to decide on, he said, and there was no authority for such a resolution as Mr. Herndon submitted. It involved a most dangerous policy, and if they tried to force Brazil in opening the Amazon the United States might be brought into great trouble and difficulty. Filibustering purposes were out of place at the convention. They had come here, Mr. Lyons believed, as Southern men, to promote Southern interests and their interests ought to stay within the province of Southern propriety and character, which was conservative. Herndon's proposition was regarded as an outright filibustering expedition upon a neighboring nation and Mr. Lyons was opposed to the scheme as a Southern man anxious to hold his hands off the rights of others.

Lieut. Maury replied to the gentleman from Virginia. The question of navigation on the Amazon he regarded as one of the main objects of the Southern commercial convention. By the law of nations and the principles of fair dealing they had a right to the free use of the Amazon. They were claiming no more of Brazil than what they were granting on the Mississippi, said Mr. Maury. The vessels of Brazil, or of England, entering the custom house at New Orleans, were free to go with their cargoes to Nashville, St. Louis, and Cincinnati or to any other port on that river. Bolivia, Peru, and Ecuador had made the navigation of the Amazon waters free to all the world, placing them in the category of arms of the sea, and had invited the people of all friendly nations to come there and occupy their lands, and cultivate and mine and gather wealth. The Southern convention should congratulate and cheer these little countries by showing sympathy for this most enlightened and liberal policy, and should let them know that the South means to assist them in opening that river to the navigation of the world; its banks and its forests to settlement and cutivation.[27]

The convention declared in favor of the Amazon project,

[27] Journal, pp. 101, 116, 117.

resolving that Southern senators and representatives in Congress be requested to urge first, that the United States Government send one or two small steamers to explore the tributaries of the Amazon which the states owning them had declared free; second, that the government of Brazil be requested to permit these vessels to make explorations and surveys upon the shores of the Amazon belonging to that nation, and third, that a line of mail steamers be established to connect Southern ports with the mouth of the Amazon or some other port of Brazil.[28]

The South needed factories. Gen. Tench Tilghman, of Maryland, asked the convention to recommend the legislatures of the South to grant bounties or other benefits and privileges for the encouragement of the Southern manufacturing industry. The remedies and plans so far offered, declared Mr. Tilghman, aimed in the right direction but they all lacked the effective means, which in his opinion, could be secured in only one way—by a patient, untiring, energetic development of natural resources. Instead of sending their raw material abroad they should manufacture it at home. That state was the most prosperous commercially which contained the greatest amount of population employed in profitable labor, and population is what the South wanted. They had all the natural resources, the raw material for manufactures, but they had not sufficient labor to engage in production. State legislatures should encourage immigration by enacting measures that would induce people to come South. These inducements, said Mr. Tilghman, might be bounties, tax discrimination and exemption or anything the state might rightfully consider helpful. He then pointed out the industries of Maryland as an example of the benefits of fostering care to infant institutions. The independence of the South could not be secured without prosperous manufactures.[29]

Who were to be the operatives in these factories? Mr. L. M. Ayer, of South Carolina, suggested a general law by the various Southern states exempting from taxation for a

[28] Journal Appendix, p. xviii. [29] Journal, pp. 49, 93.

considerable term of years, the property of actual bona fide naturalized citizen settlers, as a means of promoting immigration to the South.[30] According to Mr. D. Coleman, of Alabama, experiments had proved that slave labor could be profitably employed in manufacturing establishments, and he advocated such labor to factory owners, first, because in addition to all the other advantages of home manufacture it would tend to lessen the capital employed in producing cotton, thereby reducing the amount of its product and consequently enhancing its value; second, it would enable the planters to rest and improve their fields now so much exhausted by continued yearly tillage.[31]

The convention then agreed that: While agriculture is, and properly should be, the predominant pursuit of the people of the states represented in this convention, the interests of these states would be very greatly promoted by the employment of capital in other pursuits, especially in manufacture and mining. The abundance and cheapness of the means of subsistence, of fuel and water power, the temperature of the climate, and other natural advantages would, if properly improved, secure to these states a virtual monopoly of the manufacture as well as the growth of cotton. It was believed that the existing cost of transporting this staple abroad, would more than cover the expense of manufacturing it at home, and finally, factories and mines were very profitable and secure forms of investment. To promote these desires the convention resolved:

That a committee be formed to obtain statistical information: on the number and location of factories and mines in the Southern States; the amount of capital invested in the several establishments; the amount of income and disbursements; the number of operatives employed, free and slave, and the amount of raw material consumed; the quantity and quality of the manufactured articles produced, the prices at which they were furnished, the markets in which they were chiefly sold; and other items of information tend-

[30] Ibid., p. 43.

[31] Ibid., p. 33.

ing to show the condition and extent of the manufacturing interests of the South. The said committee was to make a report at the next meeting of the convention, address the people of the South, and urge the importance of action in the state legislatures in favor of education, of manufacures, of ship building, of direct trade, and of mining. It was to find information relating to the internal improvements of the Southern States—their industrial resources, mineral treasures, manufacturing facilities and their capacities for trade and commerce, a statement setting forth the names and lengths of the several railways, their cost and the increased value which had been imparted to lands and other property, in consequence of such improvement. The committee should prepare statistics on the subject of milling and lumber trade, as carried on by the several states represented in the convention, and also statistics on Southern agriculture. Another committee was to consider and report upon the propriety and expediency of adopting some plan for promoting Southern manufactures and mining operations.[32]

Problems of a more political nature evoked discussion and debate. Mr. Moore, of Alabama, introduced a measure describing the acquisition of the island of Cuba as a highly desirable object of the Southern States. The assembly applauded but did not adopt the resolution. The Virginia delegation declared that if the convention recommended the squandering of public lands on railroad projects, that state would never again countenance Southern commercial conventions. There was also bitter opposition to the resolution in favor of the Gadsden treaty and the Virginia delegation temporarily withdrew from the meeting.[33]

The general committee recommended a remission of the duties on railroad iron. They showed that the higher the price of iron, and the greater the difficulties which companies had in procuring their supplies of that material, the more

[32] Journal Appendix, p. xv.

[33] Baltimore Sun, April 18, 1854. New York Tribune, April 19, 1854.

burdensome did the duties become. It was unjust and unwise for the government to adopt a system of legislation which tended to increase the cost of railway construction, maintained the committee. William Gregg wanted to add "locomotives and other machinery" and C. C. Clay, of Alabama, recommended reduction or the entire repeal, if expedient, of the duties on all foreign tonnage. Mr. Tift, of Georgia, moved to strike out "remission" and insert "reduction". General Gibbs, of Tennessee, offered a substitute: the supervision of the collection of the duties on railroad iron for four years as compensation for transporting the mails on the respective roads, when completed and in operation.[34] After much discussion the convention decided to ask Congress to reduce the duties on railroad iron, and to form treaties with foreign governments for the admission of their respective products at reduced rates of duty.[35]

Then the question of internal improvements was brought up. The committee advocated that the general government undertake to improve navigable rivers and harbors, and go in for liberal donations of public lands to aid in the construction of railroads. This subject engendered a lively debate. Senator Jones, of Tennessee, contended that constitutionally, there was no difference between appropriations of land or of money. Mr. Polk, of the same state, was opposed to harbor improvements by the general government. Lieut. Maury, from the committee, asserted that such an important port as Charleston was like the Mississippi river and its navigable branches, "constitutionally improvable". Similar importance was however attached to New Orleans, Mobile, Savannah, Wilmington, Petersburg, Richmond and Norfolk by representatives of those communities. Mr. S. F. Leake, on behalf of the Virginia delegation, moved that the convention ask Congress for appropriations sufficient to enlarge the Louisville and Portland canal to a size adequate to pass the largest steamboats, and to remove the obstructions at that point of the Ohio river now so embarrassing to trade.

[34] Journal, pp. 40, 98, 100. [35] Journal Appendix, p. xix.

Governor Chapman, of Alabama, admonished the members of the convention for treading on each other's toes in respect to questions involving political considerations and he warned the assembly that if Alabama were compelled to swallow down all the doctrines contained in the various reports, the people of that state would not be represented in future sessions of the convention. Mr. Whittle, of Virginia, appealed to the members of the assembly as merchants, manufacturers and agriculturists, as practical men, aye, Southern men, not to broach political topics which would only produce dissension and discord, and thus defeat the purpose of the meeting. Lieut. Maury, representing the committee on resolutions, was disposed to compromise and was willing to withdraw the obnoxious clauses relating to harbor improvements and others fraught with political implications. Mr. Oakey, of Louisiana, said he did not come here as a suppliant to the Halls of Congress and would not beg from that quarter for anything. His state had done much in the way of internal improvements and without the aid of the general government. In spite of these unfavorable remarks the resolution favoring Federal aid for rivers and harbors was adopted.[36]

Mr. Nelson Tift, representing a sub-committee of the committee on resolutions, proposed a novel scheme for boycotting unfriendly states. In the opinion of this committee,

> the several states of the Union have practical, simple and constitutional means by virtue of powers not delegated in the Constitution of the United States, of protecting themselves against serious violations of their constitutional or natural rights, either by Congress, or by other states of the Union; and we believe that these means will avert in all time that dreadful catastrophe—disunion, and teach the enemies of the Constitution, and the usurpers of the rights of states, by the potent argument of interest as well as justice that their schemes of wrong cannot be prosecuted with impunity.

The plan suggested that Virginia pass a law, the leading provisions of which would be as follows:

> 1. That if Congress shall pass any law abolishing slavery in the District of Columbia, or in any territory of the United States, the

[36] Journal, pp. 57, 101, 110, 113, 115, 116.

Senators voting for the act on its final passage, shall he held to represent the sovereign will of their respective states (for acts of aggression committed by state authority within the limits of a state, the same remedy may be applied.) and that such states shall be considered as having intentionally violated their faith pledged to Virginia in the Constitution.

2. That if any state shall violate its faith pledged to Virginia in the Constitution of the United States by any such act or acts as specified in the first section, the governor of the state shall issue a proclamation of the fact, with a notice that all articles of merchandise brought from such faithless state, after that date, and either purchased, sold, or consumed in the state of Virginia, will be subject to a tax of 100 per cent upon their value, and any person refusing to pay such tax shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and be fined accordingly.

Here is how this scheme was to work. Congress has passed one of the acts denounced by Virginia as violative of her constitutional or natural rights. The governor then issues his proclamation of the fact, and from that date until the act of Congress shall be repealed, the law of Virginia will be in force against all the states whose senators in Congress voted for the act on its final passage. Every citizen is notified, that if he knowingly purchases, sells, or consumes, any article of merchandise brought into Virginia after the date of the governor's proclamation, from any such offending state, he will be compelled to make oath of the fact, in returning his property for taxation, and pay the tax fixed by the state.

The effect of such a law, it was claimed, would be that neither the merchants or other citizens of Virginia would purchase any merchandise from the offending states, to be sold or consumed in Virginia, consequently they would not be taxed. Her citizens would trade exclusively with states which continued faithful to the Constitution. Thus the wealth which the trade of Virginia gave would be diverted from those who had proved enemies of her rights, and given to her friends. In this way, it was believed, the Constitution and the Union could be preserved and there would be eternal peace and harmony among the states. But the convention apparently did not vote on the matter.[37]

[37] Ibid., p. 111.

Mr. C. K. Marshall, of Mississippi, the leading champion of appropriate Southern education offered several resolutions which were adopted by the convention: 1. Commercial education ought to be encouraged. 2. Universities and colleges ought to be amply endowed and there should be discrimination in favor of Southern teachers. 3. The South needed more state normal schools. 4. Legislatures and citizens of the states should encourage the writing and printing of books sympathetic to Southern institutions. 5. It was the duty of Southerners to patronize their own universities, colleges and publishing houses in preference to those of the North.[38]

There were several other miscellaneous propositions approved by the convention. 1. Every Southern state having a seaport would be asked to adopt the most efficient measures for the protection of its own slave property against abduction by sea or otherwise. 2. There was to be a committee to investigate the present deficient and imperfect condition of the mail service in the Southern states and to suggest a proper remedy. 3. Southern legislatures were urged to undertake complete geological surveys of their respective states. 4. There ought to be a Federal law making for the improvement of merchant service, encouraging boys to go to sea, and preventing desertion. 5. It was deemed desirable and important to have a uniformity in the values of the coins of different commercial nations. 6. Agricultural exhibitions and institute fairs were recommended as prominent means of developing the industrial resources of the South.[39] It was finally decided to adjourn until the second Monday in the following January, when the city of New Orleans was to be graced with the now eminent Southern commercial convention.

New York papers always kept an eye on these frequently recurring commercial convocations through correspondents or

[38] Journal Appendix, p. xx.

[39] Ibid., pp. xvi-xx. Proceedings in Charleston Courier, April 12-20, 1854.

reporters, and usually the editors had something to say concerning every one of the large conventions. The last meeting elicited three types of comment: one was flippant, another was sarcastic, and a third was sympathetic. Conventions, said the Herald, were a form of amusement quite prevalent in North America. In the North where there were about a dozen each year, they generally aimed at social reform, were invariably radical, impractical, and were attended by fanatics and reformed drunkards. The South, however, was content to hold only one a year, but there it always concerned itself with practical affairs, business prosperity; and the delegates as a rule were distinguished Southern gentlemen. The motif in the latter was patriotism, in the former philosophy. But both went in for wordy vacuities. Northern conventions closed either with a fight or with prayer, Southern with the uniform dinner and dance. In which respect, the editor believed his brethren of the South had the advantage.[40] The Tribune appeared to be relieved that the Charleston "comedy" had at last come to an end. How could a babbling body of speechmakers abounding in bombastic resolves build cities, railroads, factories, commerce and capital, asked the writer. They would keep on meeting and Charleston and Norfolk would remain villages, and the South must languish for want of varied industry. For mechanics, artists, inventors, capital and labor would never go where there were slaves.[41] But the Times observed that these Southern conventions were likely to do good by directing the attention of the Southern people to the necessity of diversifying their industry. They were beginning to see the expediency of varied agriculture, of manufacture and commerce, and whatever promoted the interests of the Southern States would eventually accrue to the welfare of the country as a whole. Pike's Pacific railroad plan, in the opinion of the editor was a practical proposition, though its ultimate success was doubtful. However, the editor regretted

[40] New York Herald, April 19, 1854.
[41] New York Tribune, April 19, 1854.

the sectional attitude and did not think Congress should be expected to aid a sectional work for sectional ends. The South, of course, had the right to build a road for its own advantage but it would mean that the North would have to construct one of its own also. The Times even invited Mr. Pike to come to New York to get the needed capital, declaring that money was much more available in Wall Street than among the Indian tribes that were to be incorporated into the Southern scheme.

The correspondent of the Times at Charleston believed that the conventions tended to counteract the feeling of excessive individualism prevalent among the planters of the South and that they brought about harmony of feeling and unity of purpose. They had developed reliable information concerning Southern institutions—their aims, possibilities, and resources.[42]

[42] New York Times, April 14, 18, 25, 1854.

CHAPTER VIII

Rivalry and Dissension

Rivalry between Southern cities soon became apparent and the convention began to wane somewhat in popularity. This feeling was first manifest at the Memphis convention of 1845, which was charged with being a Charleston movement, until Mr. Calhoun pronounced the Mississippi river to be an "inland sea". Mobile had sought harbor improvements and Western trade in 1845 and 1851, which displeased her competitive neighbors. The Baltimore convention, it was alleged, had been converted into a local chamber of commerce meeting. The Marylanders had turned most of the resolutions to their own advantage and aimed at diverting the trade of the West and South from the Gulf to the Chesapeake. Finally the Memphis meeting of 1853, in the opinion of some, had intended to side-track the Gulf trade toward the Middle Atlantic and Southern Atlantic ports. Hence, merchants of New Orleans regarded this movement as antagonistic to the interests of their city; and so when the convention met at New Orleans, January 1855, it found a rather cool and unsympathetic reception.[1]

Mr. DeBow tried to assure his fellow citizens that the convention was impartial and worthy of hearty support, but he could not overcome the feeling of apathy and indifference of either the merchants or the press.[2] Furthermore, Crescent City business men perceived other faults in the commercial convention. It attempted to accomplish too much, wrote one materialist, and it was in bad favor because there was generally an infinite deal of talking and very little perceptible effect. If they would forget the visionary members with crude and undigested views and give their united and energetic actions to the accomplishment of two or three of the

[1] New Orleans Commercial Bulletin, January 17, 1855.
[2] DeBow's Review, XVIII, 353.

dozen objects contemplated something might be done. The deepening of channels, protection and enlargement of harbors and inlets and the improvement of navigation should be the topics of cardinal importance.[3]

Nevertheless the meeting was held at the appointed time and was organized by Mayor Lewis of New Orleans. About two hundred delegates were on the scene, and they came from the following states: Louisiana, Tennessee, Mississippi, Arkansas, Texas, Maryland, Virginia, South Carolina, Alabama, Kentucky, and Georgia. There was also a delegate from Pennsylvania and another from Kansas.[4] Gen. M. B. Lamar, of Texas, the president of the assembly, told the people why they had convened. Their aims and motives were pure, exalted, holy and just, and they were here because of a stern necessity for self-preservation, and he who would impute any secret schemes other than those of virtue, patriotism, and improvements within the limits of the Constitution was a defamer and a purveyor of untruth. The railroad to the Pacific ought to be the primary object of attention. In their deliberations delegates must forego their prejudices, their personal notions, their local interests, and the speaker appealed to the spirits represented on canvas about the hall (the national colors were on exhibition and here and there were portraits of Washington, Clay, Taylor, Jackson, and Harrison) hoping they would animate and guide the assembly. Prosperity was for God and our country.[5]

At the suggestion of Gen. Felix Huston the proceedings of the convention were to be governed by the rules of the House of Representatives.[6] As all good things emanate from God, moved Mr. Bemiss, of Louisiana, it was proper that the convention invoke the blessings of the Almighty upon its deli-

[3] New Orleans Commercial Bulletin, January 12, 1855.
[4] DeBow's Review, XVIII, 355.
[5] Ibid., XVIII, 356.
[6] This method of procedure had been used in all the conventions since 1845.

berations. This was accordingly done each morning thereafter.[7]

Captain Albert Pike, of Arkansas, as chairman of the committee on the Pacific railroad reported a series of resolutions:

1. Resolved that the construction of a railroad to the Pacific ocean, from proper points on the Mississippi river within the slave-holding states of the Union is not only important to those states, but indispensable to their welfare and prosperity, and even to their continued existence as equal and independent members of the confederacy.

2. That it is the duty of the general government to aid in the construction of such a road, by grants of land to an extent limited only by the necessity of the case, and by contracting with the company engaging to build such road for the carriage thereon, during a term of years, of the mails, troops, and munitions of war, of the United States and by every other constitutional means in its power.

3. That such Southern Pacific railroad ought to be built upon the route indicated by the Southern commercial convention, which met at Charleston, in April last, that being upon the most direct line of communication between the ports of Europe and those of the Indies and of China.

4. That such road ought not to belong to the general government, nor to foreign capitalists or speculators, but should be built by a corporation chartered by a Southern state, and, as far as practicable, with Southern capital; and in the opinion of this convention, all of the Southern States that can constitutionally and properly do so, should give aid and encouragement to this great enterprise, by becoming stockholders of the company to be created.

5. That this convention approve and adopt the views and sentiments expressed in the memoir of the court of the Charleston convention, on the subject of the Southern Pacific Railroad, addressed to the governors of the several slave holding states, when taken in connection with the second of the present resolutions.

6. That this convention approves of the general features of the plan for the construction of a Southern Pacific railroad, adopted by the convention at Charleston, and commends it to the favorable consideration of the several Southern States, and recommends that immediate application be made to the legislature of the state of Louisiana, for such a charter as is understood by that plan and the resolutions on that subject, of the said convention.

7. That this convention approves in the main of the draft of a charter for the Southern Pacific Railroad Company, as prepared by the court of the Charleston convention; and that a court of five members of this convention be now appointed by the president, whose duty it shall be to take charge of said charter, and after making such changes and amendments therein, as to them may seem necessary and proper, to present the same to the legislature of Louisiana, now in session, and urge its passage by that body, and the convention most respectfully and earnestly requests that legislature to enact same, with such modifications as to it in its wisdom may seem fit.[8]

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[7] DeBow's Review, p. 356.

[8] New Orleans Commercial Bulletin, January 12, 1855.

Captain Pike spoke in support of the Pacific railroad plan and expressed his conviction that the formation of such a company as he proposed was quite feasible. One-half of the stock would be taken in the South and the other in New York and then a contract would be made with the United States to carry the mail, munitions of war and troops of the United States for a term of years, and payments made in advance in bonds of the United States. If this was chimerical, said Mr. Pike, then it was chimerical to carry on any great work in the South; but if so, it was the fault of the Southern States and people. It was time they looked about and regarded their dependent relation to the North.

From the rattle with which the nurse tickles the ear of the child born in the South to the shroud that covers the cold form of the dead, everything comes to us from the North. We rise from between sheets made in Northern looms, and pillows of Northern feathers, to wash in basins made in the North, dry our beards on Northern towels, and dress ourselves in garments woven in Northern looms; we eat from Northern plates and dishes; our rooms are swept with Northern brooms, our gardens dug with Northern spades and our bread kneaded in trays or dishes of Northern wood or tin; and the very wood which feeds our fires is cut with Northern axes, helved with hickory brought from Connecticut and New York.

Nearly everything they put on or in themselves came from the North, and it was high time they realized that prosperity could not be had with agriculture alone. Planters ought to manufacture their own shoes and coarse cotton goods for their own servants. Legislatures had done nothing and would do nothing to make the South independent, self-dependent and self-reliant.

The convention was public opinion crystallized, continued the speaker, but it was only public opinion and they could only deliberate on measures best calculated to advance the interests of the country. Their duties should be to unite the slaveholding states for the protection of their just rights and the preservation of their independence. They must meet periodically to deliberate upon all matters concerning the public welfare and make known to the legislatures of the states and the Congress of the United States, the just demands of the South, and they had a right to request such legislation as they

deemed fair and beneficial to their section. This convention demanded for the South a just proportion of the expenditure of the revenues of the United States in order to improve her ports and rivers, build light-houses, fortify harbors. They demanded public lands in constructing iron roads; and equal share in the postal system of the United States; that the territory won or purchased by the common blood or treasure be common property of both North and South. Self-preservation required them to encourage manufactures, to develop their own resources with their own capital, to open a direct communication with the Pacific and with Europe, to educate their children at home, to cease to be mere dependencies of the Northern States. But they did not favor disunion or secession, only union, prosperity and independence among themselves.

Furthermore, the prejudices of the world were against their institutions and they must unite in self-defense. Their property, their fugitive slaves must be returned. They had no political motives. Still it was evident that the vote of the great cities was controlled by their commercial interests, and when the new territories of Washington, Oregon, Nebraska, Kansas, and Minnesota, would become states of this Union—when eight or ten members from the free states would have been added to the Senate then a railroad to the Pacific would be built by the votes of free soil men. God generally helped those who helped themselves. Would they stand idly by and watch the North take this great national work from their hands? There were two alternatives: they must strengthen themselves within the Constitution or ultimately resort to dissolution of the Union, which the speaker hoped Providence would avert. Finally, said Capt. Pike, if this convention should succeed in uttering one single thought that should live through all time it would have assured the world of its utility. As a monument is the embodiment of a single lofty sentiment in marble so this convention could build an eternal monument of iron—an arm of iron extending across the continent from the Atlantic to the Pacific.[9]

[9] DeBow's Review, XVIII, 522-525.

Mr. McLeod, of Texas, spoke in reference to the Pacific railroad—the great absorbing subject which had brought the assembly together. Texas would probably form a part of the territory through which that road would pass, he asserted. The duties of the South, according to Mr. McLeod, were embodied in the following resolution which he hoped the convention would adopt: 1. This convention ought to recommend the people of Texas to reconsider the legislation on their public debt, and pay the principal and interest thereon out of their present resources of money and land, or out of any means which may be appropriated by Congress for Indian spoliations, or other claims of Texas against the United States. 2. Such a course would re-establish the trade of Texas to an extent commensurate with the vastness of the Pacific railroad enterprise and supply the means for its rapid construction, not only across her own territory, but including the sterile region between the Rio Grande and the Pacific. 3. As an essential link in the chain of the Southern Pacific railroad, the states of Virginia, Kentucky, and Tennessee, ought to organize their means for the construction of an air line railroad from the city of Norfolk to the mouth of the Ohio, or such point in the vicinity, within the limits of Kentucky, Tennessee, or Arkansas, as may furnish a convenient site for a depot, and connect readily with the proposed road from Cairo to the Red river, Texas, and the Pacific.[10] (These propositions were considered too sectional and did not pass.)

Capt. Pike, the leader in the Pacific railroad project, was also a writer of some note and his addresses were usually the most literary and most ponderous among the convention orators. Besides appealing to the sentiment and emotions of the delegates he often addressed the beautiful ladies who always adorned the gallery and who were often the chief inspiration for the brilliant and poetic flights of eloquence. Now, Judge Alexander Walker, of Louisiana, and of different propensities from the aforementioned Mr. Pike, arose

[10] Ibid., p. 623.

to take issue with the latter. After confessing his admiration for literature and oratory and the Arkansas poet, he avowed that as far as he had been able to discover, oratory and poetry never made a state economically independent. The convention, he opined, had originally assembled to establish a Southern port on the sea coast, at which imports could be received from Europe, and thus make the South independent of the Northern cities. This convention had grown, however, to such vast importance as to attempt to grapple with every phase of political economy, science and philosophy that had ever entered the mind of man. The underlying scheme of the Memphis convention (of 1853) had been to circumvent New Orleans commission merchants; to establish by means of railroads, other ports and cities in which the business belonging here could be transacted. It designed to overturn the principles of free trade established for centuries; to regulate the whole cotton business, and to fix the laws of trade and commerce. But most of their time was wasted in investigating the natural history of the valleys of the Amazon and Orinoco. One learned bishop in the church (Bishop Otey) occupied one whole day in sketching the entomology, topography, and biography of the baboons, insects, reptiles,—everything animate and inanimate—connected with the valley of the Amazon. Everything that appeared tangible, practicable, or sensible was opposed. Every planter who had a dozen negroes wanted a railroad running in front of his house, and every gentleman who had fifty negroes must have one running by his house and another by his kitchen. When he presented a resolution instructing Congress to grant appropriations for clearing the mouth of the Mississippi, he was met by a resolution to clear out some river in Wisconsin. Such was the spirit of the convention.

Judge Walker was opposed to the plan proposed for the Pacific railroad because it was too impracticable. He did not believe the South could make herself independent by merely encouraging home manufactures, and suggested that argiculture was as necessary as manufactures, for the South was

necessarily subject to the laws of nature and trade. He hoped to see the North assume a dignified spirit, and prove herself to possess all the nobler qualities of humanity, love of liberty, and devotion to Southern rights. In fact, commercial inter-dependence of the North and South was the best security of the Union. In this respect he disagreed with the gentleman from Arkansas, who regarded sentiment, a common glory, the star-spangled banner, the portrait of Washington, etc., the better bond of cohesion. The marriage alliance was an illustration. Man and woman, according to the judge, do not come together from a feeling of self-interest and mutual dependence only, but they will not continue together unless they are mutually dependent. "Sever them in interest, in care and property, and the holiest of ties will soon become frail and uncertain. So with the states. Let their interests conflict—let them be severed in commerce, in friendly intercourse, in mutual dependence, and there will be no more of vitality left in this Union than there is in an Egyptian mummy, which has rested in the catacombs for three thousand years." In conclusion, Mr. Walker advised the convention to omit something of poetry and speculation, and deal more in matters of fact and statistics, to diminish the number of biblical and classical allusions, and instead devise means of continuing railroads, and practically benefit the South.[11]

Mr. William H. Garland, of New Orleans, after dwelling beautifully upon the gorgeous sunset, floating clouds with golden fringes, ethereal sparks and peeping stars beneath a heavenly canopy, advised the convention to waste no more time on "pleasing fancies that cluster around abstract questions, but let it, like a circlet of stars, cluster around one great idea until their concentrated rays shall form one burning center, so bright that the path which leads to the power, prosperity and happiness of the South shall be so plain that none will hesitate." To locate this idea Mr. Garland told the delegates to look North and see the rapid strides made by sister states toward greatness and wealth; to New York, the

[11] Ibid., pp. 357, 632.

empire state in population, money and power; to the genius of a Clinton; to Ohio and others. They must gather wisdom, and with the ever-noble Southern spirit develop the bounteous resources nature had so kindly bestowed on them. To complain of unequal influence of the South in the halls of Congress would not rectify the inequality. They should build railroads, extend lines of improvement, fill waste lands with a teeming population and their representation and power would be equalized.[12]

The Reverend C. K. Marshall, of Mississippi, spoke on the subject of Southern education, calling attention to the fact that most of their teachers came from the North. Commercial facilities and railroads were useless as long as the education of the South was un-Southern. They were in the habit of sending their sons and daughters to the North where it was not possible for Southerners to be safely educated. Their children could not come back with proper feeling toward their families and their people when they returned from schools and colleges where their minds had been infected by fanatical teachings and inoculated with the idea that it was sinful to hold slaves. They should educate their children at home where they could be taught to think on the momentous matter of slavery in an enlightened manner.

Books that Southern people read and studied must be devoid of any antagonism to slavery. By way of illustrating the kind of teaching inculcated by Northern school books, Mr. Marshall alluded to Wayland's "Morals of Science" as containing a chapter peculiarly pernicious to Southern minds. And yet this book was sold in the South and used in schools as a textbook. He also referred to Gilbert's Atlas as having matter of the most inflammatory character, and thought it ought to be suppressed under the laws condemning the circulation of abolition literature. Another book, "Appleton's Complete Guide of the World" was described as "a literary and scientific infernal machine," containing concealed lessons of the most fiendish and murderous character, and yet it was

[12] Ibid., p. 632.

being read in the slave-holding states. Free soil books on various subjects had obtained a sort of prestige and real ascendancy while works of Southern authors were committed to the shelves and the shades. Why should the states south of the Mason and Dixon line pay, as they did, to the states north of that line the sum of nearly $5,000,000 per annum as tribute money for books, education and abuse?

Mr. Marshall then suggested that a prize be offered for the best Southern work on moral science, and that competent judges pronounce in favor of anyone of a dozen volumes produced. In twelve months every Southern school would have it for a standard class book, and so with every other needed work. Southern printers could then live by printing; stereotyping establishments would spring up; publishers would seek for successful competitors of prizes and pay them handsomely for their labors; and the book trade would soon enrich Southern cities and Southern men. The speaker even hoped and expected these publications would spread abroad and far away—as far away as black Africa. The ancient home of the slave was to be a great field of intellectual and moral improvement, of progress and civilization. Africa's redemption would be brought about through a system of servitude, not unlike the American, and so to that continent the South might send her future books. The colored men who were to rule and govern Africa would be men of talent and learning and emulation; and they would think and speak, and act and feel on the subject of domestic servitude, as citizens of the Southern States did. And they would want no cut-throat literature, no fire-brand moral science, no Putnam's Magazine, nor romantic Tom-itudes nor "Appleton's Complete Atlas" to encourage crime and piracy. Had the South the right sort of slave books Liberia and the West Indies would be her great markets and perhaps other parts of Africa and Asia.

But the chief duty they had to perform, continued Mr. Marshall, was the raising up and preparing an army of teachers thoroughly trained and fully imbued with the spirit of

the South. Each state ought to appropriate at least one hundred dollars for every county or parish, and the amount should be applied to the education of such young men and women as would agree to teach at least two years within the state. This education should take place in the best schools or colleges of the state. By this means they could cause to vegetate an abundance of the best instructors the power of Heaven ever cultivated. These ideas must be disseminated among the people and kept forever before their minds. And if their universities, colleges, seminaries, and common schools did not now rank as high as those of the older states they could be made the greatest in America and so maintain their old traditional renown for literature, science and art. Finally, everyone knew that the old field school of the South was a better institution for rearing the men and women who were to control the destinies of slave states than Yale or Harvard, or any female academy heretofore so unwisely patronized by Southerners. In short, they must make the South culturally safe for slavery.[13]

Mr. Marshall as chairman of a committee on education offered the following resolutions, which were adopted:

1. That the convention is gratified to see the several state institutions of the South prosper in the cause of education. 2. That parents and guardians be earnestly recommended to consider that to neglect the claims of their own seminaries and colleges, and patronize and enrich those of remote states is fraught with peril to the sacred interests of the South. 3. That governors and legislatures of Southern States be requested to support the establishment of normal schools for the free admission of such persons of both sexes as might wish to become teachers. 4. That the legislatures should encourage the production of Southern books by the offer of suitable prizes to authors. 5. That a committee be appointed to prepare a report on the subject of the book trade of the South.

Mr. Woolridge, of Kentucky, wanted to add another resolution. He believed the United States gave too much prominence to the great intellects of European nations, especially of Great Britain. For that reason the convention ought to instruct Congress to make American educational systems give preference to the culture of republican America, so that the

[13] Ibid., pp. 656, 662, 668.

youth of the land might enjoy the advantages of one hundred per cent American literature and be no longer hampered and oppressed by alien, lifeless, effete, corrupt, demoralizing theories and authors of the old world. This far-reaching suggestion was referred to the general committee, where it apparently remained. The convention also passed a resolution recommending the Louisiana legislature to apply $1,000 a year of the school fund for the purpose of encouraging the publication of such school books as were adapted to the instruction of Louisiana youth.[14]

Several resolutions on internal improvements were adopted. Capt. Pike's plan for the Pacific railroad was approved after some discussion. It proposed to form a corporation, to obtain a charter from some one of the Southern States, and to invite citizens and states to take stock in that road. The object was to build the railroad to California with branches running from Vicksburg, Cairo, New Orleans, and other points, if thought proper. Congress was to be asked to aid in constructing the main trunk by the appropriation of public lands. A committee consisting of Albert Pike, of Arkansas; Judge Overton, Louisiana; Dr. Young, Louisiana; Hon. Emile La Sere, Louisiana, and Col. M. T. Johnson, Texas, was to wait upon the legislature of Louisiana and obtain a charter for the Pacific railroad. The legislatures of Mississippi, Tennessee, and Kentucky were asked to aid in building the Jackson railroad to some point on the Ohio. Further propositions decided on by the convention were: A request to Congress to make improvements around the falls of the Ohio river at Louisville, and on the southern side of the river. A recommendation to Congress to appropriate sufficient funds for deepening the channel through Atchafalaya and Galveston bays and for preventing the tendency of shoaling within the harbor of Galveston; to properly fortify Galveston bay and to established a marine hospital there, and to continue the improvements in the Matogorda bay. Congress was asked to improve the navigation of the Red river; to establish a navy

[14] Ibid., pp. 631, 655, 751.

yard or naval depot at or near New Orleans; to revise the marine laws so as to enable seamen who may have lost their protection papers to obtain admission to the marine hospitals. Appropriations were wanted for a ship canal across the isthmus of Florida, and alternate grants of land for the various Southern railroad projects were desired. Southern States were called on to extend all possible aid and encouragement to the opening of the Tehuantepec route to the Pacific.

To promote the health and prosperity of New Orleans and other Southern commercial marts the convention declared it to be the duty and to the interest of the states to help in the amelioration of the sanitary condition of their section. It was unanimously resolved that the United States Government could not more appropriately grant 20,000,000 acres of the public domain than for the great and patriotic purpose of restoring one of her most important cities (New Orleans) to salubrity. A resolution was adopted advocating a quarantine of all towns and cities exposed to the ravages of yellow fever and the United States Government was solicited to grant the use of Fort Jackson to Louisiana or to the city of New Orleans for the purpose. It was said that as a result of the terrible scourge the port of New Orleans had borne a loss of $22,000,000 in commerce.[15]

Direct trade and commerce were not neglected by the delegates. Mr. C. G. Baylor, of Washington, wanted a committee of five appointed to act as a committee of correspondence between the planters of the South and the manufacturers of Europe, in regard to the cotton interest. To test the theory of direct trade was the purpose of this plan. The Liverpool merchants had entire control of the cotton trade, remarked Mr. Baylor, and he believed if the planters would write and ask for the aid of the cotton interests in Europe they would gladly cooperate in breaking up the English monopoly. England neither consumed or produced cotton, she only reproduced, and was only a speculator, controlling the great crop of America by her capital and organization. When Russia

[15] Ibid., pp. 629, 630, 750.

and Turkey went to war the South was not at all harmed, said Mr. Baylor, but if England chose to engage in conflict the price of cotton was immediately affected, and they lost millions on her account. The South should ship her cotton to the continent where the population was greater and labor cheaper. In accordance with this wish the convention resolved to recommend to the merchants and capitalists of Southern ports the establishment of lines of steamers between their respective cities and various ports of Europe, and to further this great object Congress ought to make such appropriations for deepening the inlets to harbors and for other purposes as might be deemed necessary. Another resolution recommending the Louisiana legislature to appropriate $10,000 a year to aid in the establishment of a line of steamers from New Orleans to the most western port in Europe was laid on the table. A uniform commercial code by which trade would be facilitated and the rights of the citizens of the several states be placed on an equal basis was to be urged upon all Southern states.

An unsuccessful attempt was made to commit the convention on business policies and to approve a boycott of Northern goods. Dr. McGimsey, of Louisiana, wanted the chambers of commerce and Southern commission merchants to adopt such a system of laws and regulations as would put a stop to the dangerous practice heretofore existing of making advances to planters in anticipation of their crops. Further, he would have legislatures pass laws making it a penitentiary offense for the planters to ask or the merchants to make such pecuniary advances. The doctor also demanded a non-intercourse act. That is, the planters of the South should patronize exclusively home merchants, and Southern chambers of commerce and merchants generally should exclude foreign agents and commission merchants from their respective organizations and to forbid them to purchase and sell produce in any Southern city. Opposition to this measure was vehemently offered by Gen. Huston and others on the ground that such legisla-

tion would not be efficacious, since business usually sought the best market regardless of political opinion.[16]

The question of tariff, though considered as bordering too close on the political by some, occupied valuable time of the convention. Southern members of Congress were to be instructed to favor a material modification of the tariff, to abolish duties on railroad iron and other materials, and to reduce the tariff on coal. Also they were to advocate and procure, by all constitutional means in their power such a specific duty upon sugar and molasses as these articles intrinsically merited. This was asked in justice to the people of the South, who deserved equal treatment with the people of the North in this great confederacy of states.

Diplomatic problems of a national nature were also given consideration. The convention decided to recommend to the general government that it endeavor to form a treaty with Spain and Mexico upon the same plan as that lately consummated, and known as the reciprocal treaty, with the provinces of Canada, Novia Scotia, etc. Such a treaty on such a basis would greatly benefit the American people and would incidentally enable merchants trading in the Mexican republic to compete with, if not excel, those of other nations in the markets of that country, besides creating a vast field for the exportation of the products of the South, which under existing arrangements were entirely shut out. In support of a treaty with Mexico one gentleman from Texas described the state of affairs on the southwestern frontier as deplorable alike to agricultural, commercial, and juridical interests. He wanted the President and Senate of the United States to procure a mutual commercial treaty with Mexico which would allow American products to be admitted into that country on equal terms with those of more favored nations, and another treaty for the mutual extradition of criminals and fugitives from labor—whether slaves or persons. These international questions were however not favorably reported by the general business committee. Another gentleman deemed the acquisi-

[16] Ibid., pp. 750-758.

tion of the island of Cuba essentially necessary to the proper protection of American commerce in Southern waters, and urged immediate action by Congress. The matter was, however, regarded as political and was not approved.[17]

A few other matters were brought before the convention. Dr. McGimsey, Louisiana, moved that the meeting examine the question of slave trade, introducing a resolution stating that in view of the fact that African slavery was an institution clearly sanctioned by the volume of divine inspiration and was the basis of an ideal society for a community where negro and white dwell together, be it resolved that this assembly strongly recommend the senators and representatives in Congress from the slave-holding states to cause to pass an act repealing all laws suppressing the slave trade. The matter was referred to the general committee where it remained until the convention adjourned. A final proposition approved by the members called for papers and memoirs, statistical, scientific, or otherwise germane to the objects and purposes of the convention and referring to the subjects which had engaged its attention, which information should be prepared by scholars, enlightened merchants, and men of science and learning in the Southern States, and laid before the next assembly of the convention.

The meeting dissolved, but in spite of its many resolves and oratorical gestures the New Orleans press continued to be skeptical. A voice from Mobile was also strongly opposed to the convention and thought its plans and policies hopeless and useless.[18] Commercial men, wrote a New Orleans paper, had no faith in the efficacy of the convention and many had not attended. Those who did go did so only out of courtesy. Then the writer gave a brief account of the origin and history of the movement. The great staple of the South had fallen ruinously low, the planters were deeply in debt; and the untoward state of things was ascribed to an organized combination of European capitalists. Then one day an idea

[17] Ibid., pp. 520, 629, 632, 749.
[18] Mobile Advertiser, January 14, 1855.

struck someone that a convention would be the panacea for hard times and high prices. There followed convocations consisting of amateur merchants, voluble planters, sharp witted lawyers, indolent gentlemen and aspiring politicians from the seaboard. There was grand display, fervid, burning eloquence and declamation which proposed for the existing emergency a remedy aimed to retain the growing cotton crop in the country until the manufacturer and capitalist of England would be forced to give higher prices. In the meanwhile the planters were to raise less cotton and diversify their occupations. All of which was a most notable scheme to bring the Manchester spinners to the feet of the cotton planter. But the result was that the planter became indebted for advances to the amount of his crop and the merchant anxious to meet the bill drawn against it immediately shipped the cotton on hand. So in spite of the resolutions the cotton was sent forward as soon as it reached the exporter and the planters raised as much cotton the following season as they had ever done before. The convention was a useless instrument so long as the capitalists of Holland, Belgium, Austria, and Italy did not come to Southern markets to buy and advance on cotton.[19]

Wrote the same editor a few days after the New Orleans meetings: The commercial convention was nothing that it professed to be and was a misnomer, to say the least. Everybody was present but the merchants. There were lawyers, doctors, ministers of the gospel, editors, professors, planters, and politicians entertaining the audience, particularly the lady portion of it. There were no business-like proceedings or members, and the gathering could have been called an educational, historical, a literary, or even a political convention, but never a commercial. Everything under the sun was discussed and mostly subjects entirely intangible and impracticable, which had not the least application to commerce. It accomplished one purpose however: it afforded an opportunity to ambitious aspirants seeking distinction and to those

[19] New Orleans Commercial Bulletin, January 12, 1855.

persons who wished to see their names in print and have their harmless views given an airing.[20]

The St. Louis Democrat printed articles denouncing the Southern convention as a disunion movement and the plan for the construction of a Southern Pacific railroad as a plan for the dissolution of the Union.[21] Capt. Pike was charged with going too far in upholding the rights and privileges of states and it was thought that an attempt to fraternize the Southern States and induce them to unite and form an alliance among themselves was a violation of the Constitution. Mr. Pike denied any disunionist or political motives and asserted that the only purpose in uniting the Southern States was to build the Pacific railroad, to promote the common weal. He called on the convention to defend itself against open attacks from abroad and insidious sneers at home. Observing that the attendance at New Orleans was slight he reminded the few enthusiasts that there were but fifty-six men who signed the Declaration of Independence. A small minority might exercise a powerful influence on the South and West, and to some extent the destiny of the country rested in their hands. It was the only organization possible.[22]

The editor of DeBow's Review was a consistent defender of the commercial convention and even after his home city, New Orleans, became lukewarm his loyalty to the movement was still manifest. Admitting the vagaries and impracticabilities of some persons he could nevertheless find much food for study in the record of its proceedings and abundant evidence of public spirit and patriotism among the members. Discussions at least showed them where they were and what they wanted even if the proposed remedies were faulty. And the South without doubt had been affected by the constant agitation and propaganda. All of the desired effects had not yet been produced and Mr. DeBow attributed this to the greatness of the difficulties and to the general apathy and lack of cooperation among the people of the South.[23]

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[20] Ibid., January 17, 1855.
[21] Quoted in DeBow's Review, XVIII, 524.
[22] Ibid., p. 524.
[23] Ibid., pp. 353, 623.

The next convention was to meet at Richmond, January 30, 1856. Governor Wise appointed a delegation from Virginia and promised to promote the efforts "to establish the commercial independence and social prosperity of our common mother" by all the means in his power.[24] A conservative editor of Richmond looked with much favor and confidence upon the coming convention and saw in it much wisdom, firmness and prudence. The South ought to redress the wanton insults of New England by making herself economically free; mere retaliatory laws would be useless. He was pleased to see a movement aiming at the diversification of industry but he cautioned against extensive conversion to commerce. In his opinion, the over-pursuit of trade always makes the few rich, luxurious, and effeminate while the many become poor, dependent, spiritless paupers. English society, for example, was brought to such a condition by too much trade. Commercial nations are always feeble in war, dependent on mercenary troops, and don't live long. The exclusive pursuit of trade is more to be avoided than the exclusive pursuit of agriculture; the former demoralizes and enfeebles a nation, the latter renders it ignorant, but strong, healthy and patriotic. When New Englanders would see and feel that the South was about to become independent they would cease to insult and injure her, and Southern trade with them would be agreeable, for it would then be carried on with equals.

The convention met at the scheduled time, but it was not very enthusiastic because of the slim attendance. All the states had appointed delegates but there had been unusually bad weather during January, and many people from the distant cities could not come. Delegates from the far South made two or three unsuccessful attempts to have the meeting postponed until more of their friends could arrive.[25] Most of the people present being from Virginia and adjacent states, the tone of the meeting was somewhat more moderate than that of

[24] Richmond Enquirer, January 18, 1856.
[25] Baltimore American, February 4, 1856.

the previous ones. Among the distinguished guests were Governor Wise and the members of both houses of the Virginia legislature.[26]

Gen. Tench Tilghman, of Maryland, was chosen to preside. In his opening address he expressed the hope that every one present was ardently attached to the Southern portion of the Union, but he also believed that the highest interests of the South were to be found in the Federal Constitution and that every citizen of the United States should have a prominent feeling for the integrity of the Union. Secession should be only a last resort, and God forbid that the need for dissolution of the Union should ever arise. (The speaker was frequently interrupted by applause.) [27]

Mr. Charles Albert, of Washington, offered the following for the consideration of the assembly:

1. Resolved, That the success and prosperity of any one portion of our Union, while it need not and should not conflict with the interests of any other portion, will, more or less, add to the honor and welfare of our whole country.

2. That notwithstanding the baleful opinions entertained and expressed by some of our fellow-countrymen of the North, and the resistance which has been sometimes, we regret to say, effectually made to the supreme law of the land, we nevertheless feel a devoted attachment to our glorious Union, and a fixed determination that it shall be preserved; and to this end we will direct our most earnest prayers, and exert our most strenuous efforts.

3. That we have an abiding faith in the heartfelt sentiments of the masses of the people, that they are radically Union, however at times they may be misdirected or misrepresented by the unscrupulously ambitious and designing. The wrongs we have suffered we trust are of a transient nature; and we feel that we corroborate the fact expressed in our inspired Declaration of Independence, that all experience hath shown that mankind are more disposed to suffer while evils are sufferable, than right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they have been accustomed, and therefore, here, on the soil which gave birth to our Washington and our Henry, we vow eternal fidelity to the Constitution and our Union.[28]

Mr. Gibbon, of North Carolina, argued in favor of slavery. He believed the abolitionists dishonest in taking negroes from their owners and referred to ancient Hebraic law to prove

[26] Richmond Enquirer, February 1, 1856.
[27] Baltimore American, February 2, 1856.
[28] Richmond Enquirer, February 4, 1856.

that slaves were lawful property. He had heard a gentleman say that some of the abolitionists were as honest as any other men, only they were deluded. This delusion, he thought was a gastric one, produced by eating codfish. The speaker then said a few words regarding the negroes in St. Domingo and other West India islands, and thought the convention ought to take some action to prevent slaves from going to the North, where they dressed in black, looked pale and appeared to be very unhappy.[29]

Mr. Myer Myers, of Norfolk, asked for the cooperation of the other states with Virginia in the establishment of a line of first class steamers between Hampton Roads and Liverpool. He gave a number of statistics to show the amount the South annually paid out for exports, and the vast importance a line of steamers from Europe to the South would be to her commercial wealth. He believed that no other part of North America presented such advantages as Virginia for this line.[30] Anent direct trade and commerce the convention adopted the following:

1. That the Southern States unite in the establishment of a line of steamers between Southern ports and ports of Europe and that the delegates call the attention of their respective legislatures to the importance of the subject of direct trade, and urge their cooperation. 2. That it was expedient for Southern legislatures to release from the license tax all direct importations from foreign countries, and adopt such other measures as would protect and advance a Southern commerce. 3. That Southern senators and representatives in Congress be requested not to vote for any law granting appropriations in aid of ocean mail lines terminating at any Northern port, without the insertion of a clause binding the government to extend like aid to lines that might hereafter be established between ports of the South and foreign ports.

A few other matters were acclaimed by the convention.

1. Duties on railroad iron imported from foreign countries ought to be repealed or greatly reduced. 2. It was expedient that Southern manufactures should in all cases be used, when they could be procured as cheaply as Northern manufactures. 3. Southern men should patronize Southern literary institutions, and use books published in the South, whenever available. 4. When citizens of the slave-holding states indulge in excursions for health or pleasure, a preference should be given to Southern watering places and resorts.[31]

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[29] Ibid., February 3, 1856.
[30] Baltimore American, February 2, 1856.
[31] Proceedings, Richmond Enquirer, February 1, 2, 4, 5, 1856.

The various resolutions having been passed, a dinner was given by the city of Richmond, in honor of the delegates. Gen. Tench Tilghman spoke feelingly in behalf of the Union and the rights of the South. He then offered a toast—"The union of the races and the union of the states—the one is indispensable to the preservation of the other." Governor Wise was present and also spoke in favor of the Union and the rights of the states, giving a glowing account of the vast resources of Virginia and what she might become if her people proved true to themselves. Sentiments were expressed in highly laudatory terms and in the usual way to each state of the South, followed by champagne and appropriate music after each toast. Gen. Thomas J. Green, of Texas, said: "If driven to a separation—the Southern republic bounded on the north by the Mason and Dixon line and on the south by the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, including Cuba and all other lands on our southern shore which threaten Africanization." There was a toast to the Federal Judiciary—the bulwark against encroachments upon the charter of American liberty, the power in the Republic that said to the tumultuous agitators of the North: "Thus far shalt thou go and no further." To slavery—the institution of the South "approved by man and sanctified by God—all the powers of hell cannot prevail against it." This was followed by three cheers from the diners. Finally they hailed the Union and the Constitution as the soul and body of the country. Sever the two and nothing worthy of preservation would remain.[32]

In the North the convention found little favor, the Tribune of New York still ridiculed the Southern movement, could see no reason or excuse for it, and believed it obnoxious and offensive to Northern interests.[33]

The Baltimore Sun had no faith in the convention, and saw a conflict of interests and jealous rivalry among the Southern States which made the sectional efforts futile. According to this paper the convention was really political in motive aim-

[32] Ibid., February 4, 1856. Baltimore American, February 4, 1856.
[33] Quoted in the Baltimore Sun, February 4, 1856.

ing at a defense of Southern institutions by a subversion of Northern commerce. But, said the writer, commerce could not be sectionalized, the laws of trade were not at the mercy of mere political legislation and business always followed the most profitable course. The trade of the South was identified with that of the North and would continue so irrespective of all political interests. The South lacked adequate facilities for foreign commerce and a combination of states would not provide this need, nor did any practical man expect any aid from such a source. Capital, and the enterprise to use it, were the only things upon which the South could rely for the advancement of her commercial interests and for the promotion of her unity and compactness. The conventions had a good purpose but the best thing about them was the dinner that came after adjournment.[34]

[34] Ibid.

CHAPTER IX

Free Trade, Slave Trade, and Fire-Eaters

With a miniature civil war raging in Kansas and with loud threats of secession emanating from excitable slaveholders, a convention of Southern states was now naturally regarded with mistrust by many free-soilers and overheated Unionists. Consequently the contemplated Savannah convention of December 1856 received a good deal of advertisement and aroused no little comment and speculation among purveyors of public opinion. In general, abolitionists were suspicious, secessionists were sanguine, and conservatives were calm. Some expected the discussions to be mainly political, aimed at engrafting the Southern policy on the new administration. Others conjectured that the meeting would plan to reopen the slave trade; that measures would be taken to sustain Gen. Walker's movement in Nicaragua; that it would be a preparation for disunion.[1]

The Louisville Journal railed at the convention to this effect: An assembly of secessionists as flagrant as the Nashville atrocity of 1850. Most of the members were nothing but "brazen faced disunionists," "blazing fire-eaters" breathing a spirit of fierce and deadly hostility against the national existence.—"As thoroughly treasonable as the vilest conclave that ever polluted the soil of South Carolina,—And this is the scandalous body which is about to assemble at Savannah."[2] However, the slaveholders' press assured the public that the motives of the convention were purely industrial in character, and they hoped politics would be kept out of the proceedings. The specific subjects to be tackled at Savannah were revealed in an address to the people of the South, and included the following: 1. Agriculture and its development.

[1] New York Times, Baltimore American, Baltimore Sun, Richmond Enquirer, Charleston Courier, Savannah Republican, November, December, 1856.

[2] Quoted in the Richmond Enquirer, December 11, 1856.

2. Internal improvements. 3. Domestic and foreign trade. 4. Mines, manufactures and the arts. 5. The social system and institutions of the South.[3]

Subject number five obviously allowed ample flexibility and many hostile observers remained unconvinced and consistent in their attitudes. Even the New York Times, which was at this time friendly toward the slave states, could not help but remark that commercial independence was desired by the South as a preliminary to and as an indispensable condition of political independence; that one prepared the way for the other. At the same time the editor took the occasion to throw a little interesting light on the origin and history of the Southern commercial convention. In his opinion, the movement began with Mr. Calhoun and was the means by which the latter hoped to pave the way for secession. "Their primary object was to separate in the public mind of the South, Southern interests from national interests,—to lead the people of the slave states to believe that their interests were different from and hostile to those of the North and of the Union at large.—Yet the political purpose of the conventions has been kept out of sight and made subordinate to commercial objects." But, continues the writer, there was neither unity of sentiment nor of purpose among the members and the conventions had therefore accomplished nothing. The seaboard states called for a direct line of steamers to Europe. The inland sections wanted works of internal improvements. Those who had a surplus of labor demanded manufactures. Some required an extension of the slave area while others were out for enhancing the price of slaves. Their resolutions remained vague, empty and unproductive because they could not unite on any one practicable scheme and because the South would not permit an absolute freedom of inquiry.[4]

The Richmond Enquirer [5] believed that much of the Northern criticism was due to the fact that their cities throve on

[3] Ibid., November 10, 1856.
[4] New York Times, December 2, 1856.
[5] William F. Ritchie and Roger A. Pryor were the editors.

the South's commercial dependence. The writer berated his Southern contemporaries for their inadequate esteem of industry and commerce and for their narrow devotion to the so-called higher pursuits of ambition, and reminded his readers that commercial independence was essential to political power. The convention might go astray sometimes, he said, but no one could doubt that it was animated by a patriotic purpose and would certainly bring about a South united in aim and effort.[6]

In due time nearly a thousand delegates, coming from ten states, assembled at Savannah—the largest delegations being from Virginia and Georgia.[7] According to the Boston Herald there were present at the gathering, many governors, generals, colonels, doctors, honorables, majors, captains and 104 who had no particular titles or were too modest to mention them.[8]

A slight political tincture was evident from the start. James Lyons, chairman and the first speaker, assured the delegates that Virginia, his state, while she had always been loyal to her obligations to the whole country, had ever been, as she ever would be, true to the South in all her interests. He then gave his opinion on why the convention was called. They had come together not as politicians to dissolve the Union, or mar the general happiness of the country, but as free men, free citizens of the South, for the purpose of seeing what they could do to restore what had in the past been lost—commercial independence, and with that independence in every sense of the beloved Southern section. They were still loyal and true to the whole country, although the Northern States were carrying on a war against their institutions and upon their homes. The South had to be made comfortable, more strong, more equal in all respects, since it was this section which furnished the means for the whole nation. Not a heart in this assembly was disloyal to any patriotic obligation, said Mr. Lyons. The South asked but justice, equality

[6] Richmond Enquirer, December 16, 1856.
[7] Charleston Mercury, December 9, 1856.
[8] Boston Herald, December 12, 1856.

and to nothing less would she submit. They would remain in the Union as long as it was a Constitutional Union. But the day might come when the South would have need and occasion for all her powers, to preserve her rights and honor; and they must be prepared.[9]

Other speeches from the floor followed. Mr. Lewis suggested that the convention resolve itself into a more permanent body called "The General Southern Reform Convention," with sub-organizations in each state to be convoked by the respective governors annually one month earlier than the meeting of the general convention. More revealing suggestions were bestowed upon the audience. There ought to be an organization to promote Southern emigration to Kansas. The South didn't get its just share of coast defense, and Congress should be requested to investigate the unfair distribution of arms and the inadequate Southern harbor fortifications. The Southern States should establish foundries and works for the casting of cannon and the manufacture of arms. Central American states ought to introduce slave labor as a sure means of developing their productions.[10] One member of the convention was opposed to marrying Northern women and another introduced a resolution against the periodicals of the free states.[11] These matters however were not explicitly endorsed by the convention. A resolution instructing Southern Congressmen to procure a treaty for the rendition of slaves from Canada was laid on the table by a nearly unanimous vote.[12]

Mr. Pike, of Arkansas, did not think commerce had brought together so many men from different portions of the country, but the political conditions. The recent exciting political contests, he said, had awakened the South to the threatening danger. The right to dissolve the Union existed, but what should be the policy after that were done? Should

[9] Richmond Enquirer, December 13, 1856.
[10] Proceedings in the Richmond Enquirer, December 15, 16, 17, 19, 1856.
[11] New York Times, December 19, 1856.
[12] Baltimore American, December 11, 1856.

preparation be deferred until that deplorable event took place? No, the Southern States should immediately strengthen their defenses, develop their resources, increase their prosperity and forget their local feuds and struggles. Thus would they be enabled to govern the country as they had done in the past. He trusted the Union would be perpetual but he feared that the South would soon be compelled to act out of the Union, and if they were not prepared it would be their own fault.

The subject of free and direct trade received considerable attention. Mr. C. Peeples, of Georgia, presented a resolution asking for the creation of a joint stock company to which members of the convention should subscribe at once not less than one hundred dollars each for the purpose of building ocean steamers to facilitate direct trade with England. He said his object in offering this proposition was to enable the convention to do something practical and not devote their precious time to declamation and empty resolves. Mr. Bethune, also of Georgia, failed to see the practicability of the proposal. In his opinion, it would have been better for the producer to hire his transportation, while he made it his business to raise products. The assembly were told that lines of steamships had once been established from Charleston, and within a few weeks or months, had been sold to the North at a discount. It was but a loss of capital to attempt to build steamships. The decline of Southern commerce was ascribed to the transfer of gold and silver obtained in the South for customs to the city of New York, to be used for the benefits of Northern merchants. The remedy for this evil was to be found in the repeal of the tariff laws and in direct taxation. Then the Southern merchants could obtain and sell goods as cheaply as the Northern merchants. Foreign manufacturers would bring their goods to Southern ports to exchange for local products and the country would be relieved of the 2,800 job holders now engaged in collecting the revenue at an annual salary of 900 dollars each. Congress would then be more economical with the public money in appropriations, for the

rich and influential folks would be averse to taxing themselves.

A Marylander, Mr. Richardson, said that he had been afraid when he came to the convention that there would be too many things to attend to. But he was now happy to find that a friend from Georgia could produce a perfect panacea which would abolish all affliction and restore the South to its pristine power. All that was necessary was to ask Congress to repeal the revenue laws and impose direct taxation, and all would be well. That there was much truth in Mr. Bethune's argument, Mr. Richardson granted, but he was afraid the people would not understand it. Mr. John A. Calhoun agreed with the gentleman from Georgia and declared that if there was only one remedy for the Southern people, free trade was that one. He described the onerous tariff laws and asserted that the South paid a tribute of more than forty million dollars for the privilege of being in the Union, while the North had the full benefit of it. If that amount were distributed among the Southern States, said Mr. Calhoun, they would flourish like green bay trees, and it was time the South be informed of this situation. The free traders finally succeeded in having a committee appointed which was to make a thorough examination of the question.

Another salient feature of the meeting was a long letter from the Honorable Robert Toombs, of Georgia, in which he offered a plan for the South to secure her just share of foreign commerce. Not by commercial associations nor through the general government would their section achieve commercial independence, but by state legislation, by applying to the Southern States the system of indirect taxation. A state was not allowed to lay duties on imports but she might tax all goods imported by other states and offered for sale within her limits. So it was Mr. Toombs' proposal to ask the Southern States to levy a consumption tax upon all goods, wares, and merchandize offered for sale within their borders, other than those imported directly from foreign countries. This tax should be high enough to raise sufficient revenue for all the

wants of the state without imposing upon the people any capitation or other direct tax whatever and high enough to prevent all indirect importation of foreign goods. A consumption tax was more easily paid and needed no custom house. Mr. Toombs asserted that state treasuries would thus be filled, the Southern people would be protected against unjust legislation, and direct trade would be brought to their ports. Finally, it would give profitable employment to Southern capital and labor, educate the people, develop resources and build up a great and powerful and prosperous commonwealth to protect the people from all dangers.[13]

There was quite a difference of opinion in the South on the remedy offered by Colonel Toombs. The Calhoun or Southern rights portion warmly endorsed the proposition [14] while the Union wing disapproved. Some of the latter critics declared it to be unconstitutional, impracticable, contrary to the first principles of political economy, and leading directly to disunion. If carried into effect, they believed, it would do more to alienate the North and South than any measure that had ever been proposed. And why assume that foreign commerce was desirable? All this talk on the subject of direct trade, wrote one editor, was only crude speculation of ignorant politicians who knew nothing of the practical details of trade. It was cheaper to buy in New York than to import from Europe and that was all that mattered to business men. Direct trade projects were too costly if not impossible under the existing conditions in the slave states, and the North ought to be permitted to do that which the Southerners could not do as well. To be successful in the proposed commercial enterprises a heavy capital would have to be spared from other pursuits, but since capital always seeks the most accessible and profitable field of operation it had for the time being to flow toward the Northern cities. "Pass what law you may," wrote a Savannah editor, "but as long as the South

[13] DeBow's Review, XXII, p. 102.

[14] Charleston Mercury; Augusta Constitutionalist, December 15, 1856.

offers a less profitable return for investment every cargo of imported goods that it brought into our ports will either rot or be reshipped in search of a market." [15] The South could not attain commercial independence by legislation; she must grow into it.

Congress should reopen the slave trade, declared Mr. W. B. Goulden, of Georgia, and he wanted the convention to approve of a resolution to that effect. The matter was laid on the table by a decided majority. At the next session Mr. Jones, of Georgia, asked that it be removed from the table and be discussed. By a vote of 67 to 18 the question was postponed. Another attempt to have the subject discussed resulted in a gain of six votes for the minority. The following day a third gentleman asserted that the negative vote taken the preceding day was caused by an unmanly fear of looking certain facts in the face.

A lively debate on the slave trade then ensued. Mr. Scott, of Virginia, said it was not his purpose to force the convention to favor the slave trade but that he would like to have the matter discussed and a committee appointed to investigate the facts. The continuous drain of slaves from the border states to supply the sugar and cotton regions engendered a scarcity of labor which could be supplied either from Africa or from Europe. To fill the deficiency with free workmen was undesirable because it would mean the ultimate transfer of the government from the native population to immigrants, thus converting the servant into the master. So to prevent Virginia and other border states from becoming free soil, Mr. Scott advocated the importation of additional supplies of slaves. In his opinion the avowed and principal object of the convention was to circumvent the schemes of the free-soilers and to strengthen the foundation of Southern society. But instead he found it refusing to listen to facts which showed that certain portions of the South would lose their allegiance to the fundamental system if the slave trade were not reopened. They had been beaten in the race to pre-

[15] Savannah Daily Republican, January 5, 1857.

serve the equality of power because the North had at her command boundless supplies of population with which to fill the vacant lands of the West.

Mr. Scott continued:

> When the importation of slaves had been interdicted by Congress as a piracy, if the migration into the country of Europeans had been placed under similar disabilities, if it had been declared a felony to bring a Dutchman here, as a piracy to introduce a negro, the balance of our system upon which the government was placed would never have been overthrown. . . . We are entitled to demand the opening of this trade from an industrial, political and constitutional consideration. . . . With cheap negroes we could set the hostile legislation of Congress at defiance. The slave population after supplying the states would overflow into the territories, and nothing could control its natural expansion.

Northern free labor could not compete with well-trained Africans, maintained Mr. Scott, and so with all her industrial resources developed, and with the complete command of the markets of production the South would assume a position of very great and permanent strength.

Mr. Albert Pike, of Louisiana, said he would suffer himself to be torn by wild horses before he would justify the renewal of the African slave trade and he would be equally ready to suffer that fate before he would admit that slavery itself was wrong. He believed that in time this country would advance the negro, educate him; civilize him and eventually make him free; that the Constitution contemplated that the slaves would gradually be 'made more persons and less things. Slaves were then worth from $1,200 to $1,400 each and it had been said that if the trade were reopened the price would be reduced to $150 or $200. Mr. Pike conceded this, but he believed that the slaves then in the country would be proportionally decreased in value and the South would lose in the end.

Mr. Cochran, Alabama, was of the opinion that the increase in labor supply should be allowed to progress in a natural way and that the importation of more slaves would bring about an over-supply of labor. He ridiculed the sentimental attitude of people opposed to the slave trade and wanted the question discussed from the point of view of expediency only.

Mr. Calhoun, South Carolina, thought the horrors of slave trading were greater when carried on illegally than it would be if carried on open and free. It was a blessing to the African to bring him to this country. But the main reason for the necessity of the slave trade was to counteract the influx of hireling labor from abroad to the Northern States.

Mr. Baker, Alabama, repudiated the sentiment of deluded individuals who hoped that the time might come when all men would be free. This privilege he desired to extend only to white men since God had never intended the African to be free. If republican institutions were to be preserved slavery must remain unimpaired.

Mr. Goulden, Georgia, could see no difference between buying a man in Virginia who was a slave there and buying one in Africa, who was a slave there. The trade must be reopened and he expected it to be in less than five years. England, he said, had abandoned the black slave trade and went in for a more barbarous one—the yellow coolie trade. Superabundance of negroes in the South would make them cheaper and thus would allow all white men to own slaves. A monopoly by the wealthy would thereby be prevented and antagonism between slavery and labor would be avoided as in the North the struggle between labor and capital had not been.

Mr. Jones, Georgia, saw the South losing its strength and power since the closing of the slave trade and would save it from competitive ruin by reopening the African traffic.

Mr. Spratt, South Carolina, hoped the motion on slavery would prevail and deemed it the most appropriate one to occupy the attention of the meeting. He would not recognize the right of Congress, the organ of the North, to impose restrictions on the slave trade, and believed the South alone might legislate on her own affairs. The question should be met at once.

Mr. Andrew Hunter, of Virginia, did not think the convention competent to consider the question. He wanted the matter postponed for a year so that the press and public would have time to study the advisability of taking such a

serious step. It was a great moral question upon which the South should ponder long before it placed itself in a defiant attitude against the whole Christian world. It involved tremendous consequences, and time for reflection was necessary.

Mr. Richardson, of Maryland, was not prepared to advocate commerce in slaves and was exceedingly sorry the subject had been brought before the convention. The preceding day one gentleman had said that the repeal of the tariff was all that was necessary to make the South independent and prosperous. Now another gentleman proposed another panacea—the whole strength of the South lay in her slave labor. Mr. Richardson said he was himself a slaveholder, but there had been enough controversy in the country and in the name of humanity he trusted the firebrand would not be considered.

Mr. Gholson, of Virginia, was opposed to the motion. It was a direct attack upon the Union; it was useless to argue with the whole civilized world; and the South would lose many of the friends she now had.

Mr. Funsten, Virginia, informed the assembly that in his state they believed the institution of slavery was an ordinance of God to bring the African to America, to educate him to be returned in good time to christianize and civilize the country from which he came. He was however, satisfied that the present discussion of the question would not be productive of good.

Mr. McLeod, of Texas, pledged his state to the extremists' views. Mexico was falling to pieces and needed negro labor to develop its resources. It was the duty of the South to introduce there the peculiar institution and counteract European intrigue.

Messrs. Croper and Green, of Virginia, spoke in favor of the motion. Mr. Goulden, the mover of the resolution, affirmed the legality and morality of the slave trade and stated that the South had the right to extend her institutions just as the North claimed the right to extend hers. Slavery was a gift from God and he was ready to defend it in all its bearings. It conferred equal blessings on both races. Now

was the time to decide the question and assert Southern rights before the whole world. The subject was of more importance than all the commercial movements that could be set on foot.

As a result of the foregoing demonstration a committee was appointed, charged to investigate the facts as to the condition of slavery, the international laws on slave trade, the propriety of reopening the slave traffic with Africa, and to report at the next meeting.[16]

The convention studied the educational problem of the South. Delegates declared that a large number of text-books in use were unsuitable and dangerous to Southern youth and ought to be dispensed with, that Southerners were quite capable of producing books at home decidedly superior to the Northern and more congenial to their spirit. The tendency of boys and girls to go away from home to study endangered the Southern language, style, rhetoric, logic, ethics, and religion. Their difficulties had arisen from the unwillingness of Southern men to become teachers, thus letting schools, and colleges pass almost entirely into the hands of Northern men, who had gradually introduced the crude text-books of their native soil to the exclusion of the better matured books of the older schools of Europe. John B. Jones, a Southern sympathizer from New Jersey, suggested a novel scheme for spreading Southern propaganda. He proposed the establishment of four daily journals in Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and Baltimore, to act as publicity agents for Southern institutions and as an espionage bureau to detect unfriendly writers, business men and societies, and expose them to the judgment of slave holders.[17] It was recommended that the states establish agricultural schools to teach scientific and practical farming. There was a plan to assess a poll tax on every man and an ad valorem tax on all property, the funds arising to be used to give every child a free common English education.

Finally the convention decided to appoint a committee of

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[16] DeBow's Review, XXII, 216; Richmond Enquirer, December 17, 1856; Charleston Mercury, December 12, 13, 1856.

[17] DeBow's Review, XXII, 103, XXI, 548.

leading Southern educators whose function it would be to prepare a series of books in every department of study from the earliest primer to the highest grade of literature and science—books which would be best qualified to elevate and purify education in accordance with Southern principles and beliefs. When these books should have been prepared, the legislatures of the Southern States would be requested to order their use in all the public schools of their respective states, and the trustees of incorporated academies be requested to adopt them as their text-books. Further, Southern publishers should be encouraged, Southern institutions of learning should be patronized in preference to others. Southern literature and periodicals should be preferred, and if Northern newspapers must be read there should at least be an apparent predilection for the conservative or favorable ones.[18]

A project offered by Mr. Pike, which had been adopted at two previous conventions, for constructing the Pacific railroad was again approved. The road was to be built from the Mississippi river along the 32nd degree of north latitude to the Pacific ocean to run through El Paso. This road was to consist of separate and continuous sections. It should be incorporated and built under the authority of the state and territorial legislatures, so far as they could constitutionally do it, and the means of construction should be derived from individual, corporate and state contributions together with such aid as might be obtained from grants of the public domain for forts, military contracts, or any other service which might be lawfully rendered to the Federal Government by the said company.[19] Mr. Baldwin, of Virginia, protested against being committed to a scheme by which states were called upon for contributions to build this road. It was a violation of Southern political policy, and grants of land would lead to fraud and corruption. Mr. Cochran, of Alabama, said the plan didn't ask for sovereignty of the land but

[18] Richmond Enquirer, December 16, 1856. Charleston Mercury, December 18, 1856. DeBow's Review, XXII, 96.

[19] A charter for the proposed company had already been granted by the legislature of Louisiana.

only for the right of way. Mr. Burwell, of Virginia, approved the enterprise declaring that if the road wasn't built as proposed the Federal Government would designate another route more favorable to the spread of Northern institutions and population. Upon completion of the Pacific railroad depended greatly the permanency of the Union and the defense, development and independence of the South, it was asserted. Another resolution was passed recommending state legislatures to the favorable consideration of local railroad connections in various sections to bring about a closer tie between the South Atlantic and Gulf States.[20]

Other resolutions adopted by the convention were:

1. Interoceanic communication across the Isthmus of Tehuantepec was important to Southern interests and deserved encouragement. The Federal Government should cooperate with the Tehuantepec corporation of Louisiana for the transportation of United States mail.[21]

2. The legislature of Kentucky was urged to connect the waters of the Chesapeake with those of the Ohio and Mississippi, to complete the remaining link by constructing a railroad from Louisville to the Cumberland Gap.

3. Appropriate measures should be taken, if not by the general government, at least by the Southern state legislatures to promote and encourage the establishment of cotton factories in cotton growing states.

4. The abundance and cheapness of the means of subsistence, of fuel and water power, the temperature of the climate and cheaper transportation render the South an attractive field for the investment of capital and labor.

5. Locomotive, machine works and mining should be reared and nourished.

6. A proposed weekly ferry line of steamships of 20,000 tons between the Chesapeake bay and Milford Haven, (England) it was believed, would ameliorate the commercial and strengthen the polical condition of the South. It was therefore commended to the immediate consideration of Southern citizens. Such a steam ferry line would have the capacity to carry annually a larger amount of Southern merchandise than 300 sailing ships of 1,000 tons each. It was said, this enterprise would effect an entire revolution in the traffic of the world, in which the slaveholding states would be the principal beneficiaries; and it would carry at no distant day the mail, the passengers, the gold and silver and everything from all parts of the globe, thereby affording lucrative employment to railroads and increasing the South's prosperity. In time of war this

[20] Richmond Enquirer, December 16, 1856.
[21] Charleston Mercury, December 12, 1856.

line of steamers would be one of the strongest arms of the national defense.[22] Every Southerner should subscribe for a share of the stock in this stupendous Southern enterprise.

7. Every exertion should be made by the citizens of the slave-holding states to extricate themselves from commercial dependence. They should do their own carrying trade, their own buying and their own selling, and thus save the hundred million dollars which they annually bestowed on other states that were seeking to deprive the South of its very means of existence.

8. They asked for aid and encouragement to Southern ship building.

9. Congress should render assistance for promoting commerce between Southern ports and South America.

10. Each of the Southern states should establish schools for the rearing and education of seamen.

11. A committee on statistics was to ascertain (a) the value of goods, wares, merchandise, and other articles (other than those manufactured in the South) which were annually consumed in each state; the amount of such goods purchased of or bought through Northern merchants and the amount brought into the Southern States by direct importation from foreign countries. (b) The amount of the public debt of each Southern state, the indebtedness of Southern citizens to foreign countries, to Northerners and to the citizens of the South. (c) The amount that each slave state was annually tributary to Northern citizens in the way of duties, imports and general purchases.[23]

As the preceding pages have certified, the convention was not altogether devoid of politics and editors here and there noted the fact. However, many of them were happy to learn that the prevailing sentiment was conservative, that the slave trade project was not unanimously popular and that disunion plans were not even presented.[24] Yet a large number of the leading men of the slave-holding states had come together to seek and to find the destined solutions of their burning problems, and beneath the surface of conservative debate and moderate resolutions there lurked a great idea, the thought of a united and independent South, and some could see the likelihood of its complete realization at some similar future convention.

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[22] Some people suspected this scheme to be a contemplated nucleus for a future Southern navy—New York Times, December 4, 1856.

[23] Charleston Mercury, December 18, 22, 1856. Richmond Enquirer, December 16, 1856.

[24] Baltimore American, December 5, 11, 1856. Baltimore Sun, December 11, 1856. Richmond Enquirer, December 16, 1856.

Editorials in the New York Times varied as the news it received of the proceedings. On the thirteenth of December it was believed that for once a commercial convention had done good—by serving as a sort of safety valve by which wild-goose schemers could ventilate their plots. "The Southern gale has blown over," wrote the Times. "Disunionists have lowered their crests and now the Union may be preserved a little longer." On the fifteenth the editor expressed his anger over the convention's rabid sectionalism in denouncing Northern books, men, opinions, enterprises, etc., and called the meeting a vulgar display of ignorance and impotence. A few days later, he believed these periodic gatherings had become a lot of stereotyped chatter and a chronic weakness of the Southern mind. They wanted to see the South grow and prosper, continued the paper, but why couldn't these black belt theorists be brought to comprehend that dollars and not resolutions would create commerce and factories. And the Southerners were cordially invited to come to Wall Street for their needed capital. However the readers were calmed by the statement that after all these conventions were not a fair standard by which to judge the South, but were a crowd of fire-eaters who would fan the fire of passion and dissolve the Federal Union.[25] Still another writer regarded the convention in general as a pleasant social reunion although he hoped they would some day forego amenities for more practicable affairs.[26]

The struggle between the sections and intensified Southern discontent with the Union would not abate; so in August 1857 the city of Knoxville, Tennessee was favored with the annual gathering of the politico-commercial convention. Again the North was assured that the meeting was to be animated by a spirit of fair-mindedness to the Union and was only to seek concert of action to develop their material resources and to defend their institutions against the onslaughts

[25] New York Times, December, 13, 15, 17, 18, 19, 1856.

[26] National Intelligencer, quoted in Baltimore American, August 5, 1857.

of fanatics. The delegates present came from Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, and Arizona.[27]

It was said that Northern reporters who had attended the Savannah convention the preceding year, misrepresented and maligned its noble purpose; and there was an attempt to exclude all unfriendly Yankees from the present meeting. Mr. Mason, of Alabama, favored exclusion, while Messrs. Lapsley, of the same state and McCall, of Florida opposed the measure. Mr. Flournoy, of Virginia, would admit the reporters if they promised to tell the truth from now on. Roger Pryor didn't think it was necessary to give them a special invitation, as some had advised, but he wouldn't have them excluded. Messrs. Lyons, of Virginia and McRae, of Mississippi, upheld the principle of freedom of speech. After considerable time had been consumed the motion to debar was tabled and all Yankee reporters, prejudice notwithstanding, were permitted to take seats and perform their journalistic mission.[28]

Mr. DeBow, the chairman, opened the meeting with an address. The convention, he said, was a very common mode of preparing the people for great emergencies and it was peculiarly adapted to the South whose scattered population rendered the power of the press less effective than in other quarters. If these conventions had not stayed their enemies they had strengthened the hearts and the purposes of themselves and had given spirit to the South. They had stimulated or had been the exponents of discussions, which for ability and demonstrative power in behalf of the South and her institutions, had scarcely a parallel in history. It was true no practical results had flowed from these meetings. They had built no railroad, equipped no steamships, nor established a factory or a college (as many of their enemies

[27] Represented by Lieut. Sylvester Maury, U. S. Army.

[28] Charleston Courier, Aug. 15, 17, 1857. Memphis Daily Appeal, August 14, 1857.

had asserted), but if the history of the ten years were examined it would be seen that the convention prepared the South to understand the importance of all these matters, and when the time should have fully come, they would not be wanting. Therefore without discouragement should they continue their instructive appeals to the people. Let them show the people that they have "rights more to be valued and defended than any theories or sentiments about the Union, and a thousand times more important, because involving everything for which government or Union is at all to be valued."

The Southern people were advised to behold their enormous resources which could not only render them an important number of the Federal Union but were sufficient and adequate to enable them "to exist without the Union and to maintain the rank of a first class power whenever it shall be deemed necessary to establish a separate confederation." It was their duty to develop these resources to increase this sense of independence, security and power by opening up avenues of inter-communication, by stimulating agriculture, by promoting commerce, by steamships and steam mills, and above all these, by a system of home education which would save their children from the poison infecting the springs from which they had hitherto been wont to imbibe. The speaker then described the greatness of Southern resources, related the discriminatory policies of the Federal Government which had prevented natural development and followed up with a rueful portrayal of the burdens of protective tariff and of navigation laws which were building up feudal palaces throughout New England, and sending fleets of merchantmen from her ports.

The South should assume her stand among the nations, asserted Mr. DeBow. The castles of New England should be transferred to the milder mountains of Virginia, Tennessee, and the Carolinas while the Northern fleets and navies should be returned to the warmer waters of the Chesapeake, of Charleston, Brunswick, Savannah, Mobile and New Orleans.

Southern trade would be free for all the world. The wants of a most imposing government could be supplied with the revenue and duties that were bound to accrue from the most lucrative commerce on earth. Diplomacy would be liberal and treaties wise. The North would still be,—but in her place. She would find the cotton kingdom a profitable neighbor at her door, ready to trade upon just and fair terms, or if these were denied ready and willing and able to carry that trade to another market. She would not dare make war on the Southern confederacy for fear of crippling the channels of her already impoverished industry and because the genius, the instincts, and the education of the Northern people had unfitted her for war. The Southern border property would be protected as sacredly as was the common property on the Canadian line. Northern dreamers and theorists would no longer imagine themselves responsible for the institutions of slave-holders, and the whole power of the Yankee government would be happy to return fugitive slaves under rendition treaties rather than pay for them. The characteristics of American life would prevent border wars and reciprocal treaties would be to the interest of the Northern and Southern governments, offensive and defensive, against the rest of the world together with South America, to maintain the integrity of the western hemisphere against the balance of power system of Europe. England would be friendly to the South because of her dependence on that section for industrial material, while France would be too far away, too weak and too busy to venture a war with the cotton kingdom. The Mississippi like the rivers of Europe would be free to navigation. Population would rapidly flow south, for the South could offer a greater prosperity and a greater happiness. These people would be men of intelligence, of enterprise and capital, the artisans of Europe and of the North coming to new and boundless fields. And should war come the South would prove invincible. Her system of labor would enable her to spare more men and her semi-military system of society would raise her material character to the highest possible rank.

Against the North they would at least be a match, at any and at all times; and against one or all of the European powers, the common interests of America would dictate her security. Mexico, Central America, Cuba and the West Indies would in the near future see the advantages of the slave system. The whole world would in time be willing to re-open the African slave trade and Southern labor would thereby flourish. These were the views to which the Southern people should accustom themselves. Teach them to the children, advised the chairman, discuss them in gatherings, proclaim them in conventions, and so be prepared for those broad and national duties of citizens either within the Federal Union or without it.

Mr. DeBow resumed: Progress had already begun toward the development and strengthening of the South, morally, politically, industrially, and intellectually. Shipping interests and direct trade were augmenting, great internal improvement works were being pressed with vigor, new roads were opening up the hitherto inaccessible interior, the work of the Southern Pacific railroad was being successfully prosecuted, and steamship lines between Southern ports and Europe were being consummated. Abundant crops with the highest prices were enriching the South, and factories were fast increasing in number and dividends. Their educational institutions were growing and Southern schools and teachers were being preferred to Northern. Southern school books were being prepared, printed and used, and Southern literature had at last begun to receive a position of encouragement, and Southern resorts were becoming more popular. Conventions might have had much to do with these gratifying results, said the chairman, and so they ought to proceed with more discussion on methods of maturing the innumerable plans for Southern development. Encourage individual and state efforts, demand an equal Federal consideration, insist upon a revenue tariff or direct taxation, upon equal mail facilities, equal bounties, if any, to Southern steam service; justice and the Constitution in Kansas, a fair distribution of arms and proper protection in forts, light-houses, and navy

yards for the Southern coasts, the repeal of the navigation and coasting laws, the recall of the slave fleet from the coast of Africa, protection to the Tehuantepec route and the proper modification of the neutrality laws.[29] Here Mr. DeBow's address ended and the convention proceeded to transact business and to make more speeches.

A resolution was introduced by Mr. W. W. Boyce, of South Carolina, advocating the repeal of the tariff laws and the substitution therefor of a system of direct taxation by the Federal Government.

There was a debate. Mr. Flournoy, of Virginia, was opposed to direct taxation if the revenue was to be collected by the officers of the Federal Government. The thing could not be done in the present Union—the effort would lead to disunion. If the gentlemen were in favor of secession they ought to say so plainly and boldly and not endeavor to reach it in such a roundabout way. Mr. Lyons, of Virginia, said there was not enough time to discuss the matter and asked for delay.

Mr. Jones, of Georgia, declared the present system of collecting revenue in the United States was corrupt, iniquitous and unjust between sections and between classes and lead to extravagance and bribery in the administration of the Federal Government. From the war of 1812 to 1850 the government had collected nearly ten billion dollars, of which the South with two-fifths of the population, had paid seven billion dollars and the North with three-fifths of the population had only paid three billion dollars. When the majority of the North distributed this money they took seven billion to themselves and left the South only three billion. In the year 1856, according to Mr. Jones, the South had lost $60,000,000, and that was the way the system had operated between sections. Corruption stalked abroad in the land so much that the stench was now visibly rising to high heaven, and the only way to exterminate this pest was to establish a system of direct taxa-

[29] Official Report, Proceedings Southern Commercial Convention, Knoxville, Tennessee, 1857.

tion by the Federal Government. Moreover a direct tax would preserve the Union, not dissolve it. Abolitionism had not been existent before the tariff but as these import duties increased abolitionism grew and flourished. If the tariff and custom houses were abolished and if the whole world were allowed to come in competition with the Southern manufactures everyone's trade would depend upon his good behavior, and Mr. Jones was certain there would be no more noise about "niggers." The fighting fanatic would become as polite as a French dancing master.

Mr. Fisher, of Virginia, deemed it inexpedient for the government to tax lands and slaves of the South which it did not protect. Virginia, he said, protected the property of her citizens and had an undoubted right to tax them but he did not think such was the case with the Federal Government.

Mr. Jones believed the United States would protect Southern slaves and lands from foreign invasion and was bound to render assistance in time of insurrection. But he could not see the difference between slave property directly taxed and discriminating duties upon the articles the products of that labor purchased. The poor man had to pay 54½ per cent more for his goods bought with his cotton under the tariff than he would have to pay without the tariff; his payments fell short and he had to give his note when due, and found himself unable to pay it.

In the year 1856, showed Mr. Jones, the people put into the treasury, through the custom house, over $64,000,000, and he was able to prove that it cost them nearly twice as much to get it there:

> The importer charged the jobber 10 per cent on the tariff he paid —6,400,000; add to it the 64,000,000 and you have $70,400,000 which this same tariff cost the jobber. The jobber charged the retailer 15 per cent profits on what he paid for tariff—10,560,000—add it to the 70,400,000 and you have $80,960,000 which the retailer pays tariff and profits on tariff. The retailer charges the consumer 50 per cent, tariff and profits on tariff—40,480,000—add it to the 80,960,000 and you have the enormous amount of $121,440,000 which it cost the people to put $64,000,000 into the treasury of the custom house.

The result though not all told was monstrous, since the people had to keep thirty or forty million dollars invested in property necessary to carry on the tariff systems. Under a system of direct taxation, the cost of collecting would stop at the amount paid collectors, and as there would be no surplus collected, the collectors would be paid only for collecting the amount needed by the administrators to transact the people's business—probably 15 or 20 million instead of 121 million. Also the people could then better watch the government and be more familiar with the destination of their money. It was Mr. Jones' plan to have Congress tax the property of the people of the United States as Georgia taxed the property of her people—to let every man give in, under oath, the amount of property he owned and let that property be taxed as the government should require to meet its expenses. In conclusion, he proclaimed that God had willed this a world of free trade and it therefore must so be.[30]

Mr. Blount, of Alabama, was opposed to Federal taxation of slave property. "Are we," he asked, "to give to the Congress of the United States the right to levy a poll tax upon each one of our slaves, and thus give it the right to legislate concerning our slave property?" It was a monstrous idea, he said, to submit that class of property valued at 2,000 million dollars to the will of Congress.

Mr. Hubbard, of Alabama, believed that direct taxation, according to the value of each man's property, would transfer from the North to the South untold millions. Money would rapidly accrue to every section of the country, if the expenses of collecting the taxes were distributed, instead of being heaped up in cities to support a horde of office seekers and beggars. There was no harm in taxing negroes, and men would, under the new system, pay according to their wealth.

Mr. Maynard, a member of Congress from Tennessee, pointed out that the foreign producer and importer paid the revenue and not the American consumer. The removal of the tariff on sugar, he said, would really be money saved to

[30] Ibid., pp. 67-70.

the Cuban producer. It was better to tax the English, French, Germans, Dutch and others than to tax Southern citizens. A direct tax would not only burden the white population, but the slaves as well, in the proportion of 3 to 5, and a tax on the amount of property would impose a most unequal burden upon the slaveholders. Mr. Maynard's main objection to the contemplated system was that it would necessitate an army of Federal officers—one in every county—to collect taxes and prosper at the public's expense.

Mr. Elliott, of South Carolina, hoped and trusted that they might press the government's conscience enough to allow it to exempt slave property from taxation since the North recognized negroes as persons. Duty on a gun he had imported from England was more than half the tax that he paid to the state of South Carolina upon one hundred slaves.

According to Mr. W. W. Boyce, of South Carolina, the destinies of England and of the North were hanging upon a thread of cotton. Southern exports amounted to two-thirds of all the exports of the United States while their imports were negligible and indirect taxation was one of the causes of this condition. The tariff, he said, was a bounty to Northern manufacturers and a burden on the consumer. Direct taxes would take less money out of the citizen's pocket and the people would know what they were paying. If a state tax were raised 10 per cent the people grumbled but if the Federal tax were raised indirectly 100 per cent they were peaceful and quiet, and that was the great evil in the tariff system. The present method of taxation, continued Mr. Boyce, caused extravagance in government expenditures because the people didn't know how much they paid. It encouraged the manufacturers of the North to the disadvantage of the South who was thereby prevented from undertaking industrial enterprise. But the system of direct taxation was better for the Southern States for political reasons. New England was both the hotbed of abolitionism and the home of manufactures. Commercial independence could not be attained when the very men who hate and scorn the South

were sustained by Southern money. Direct taxation would stop the spindles of the North and make that section a cold and barren desert, but that would only be a punishment of justice.[31]

The debate on free trade and direct taxation reached this politically pronounced juncture, but no vote was taken and the subject was postponed for the next convention where it was destined to remain unmoved and undiscussed.

Direct trade, once the foremost aim of the commercial convention was now to be examined anew. Agriculture would give them life but commerce would bring prosperity, it was said. Moreover the Southern States must fortify themselves commercially against the political encroachments of the North and "cease doing homage to that overpowering and overshadowing fiscal fort of Wall Street." Mr. Dudley Mann had organized an Atlantic steam ferry company at Old Point Comfort in Virginia, which was to build several ships and run a direct line to European ports. About 6,000 dollars had already been collected for this project. Among the subscribers were ex-President Tyler, Gov. Wise and other prominent Virginians. Further subscription to this company would be open to every Southern citizen and no one was to be permitted to buy more than a single share of 100 dollars of its capital stock. It was to be common property of the Southern people. Mr. Barny, of Louisiana, proposed a direct line of steamers to communicate regularly between New Orleans and Bordeaux, and solicited subscriptions for shares in that contemplated corporation.[32]

Mr. Churchwell, of Tennessee, offered a resolution which requested the governors of each Southern state to appoint five delegates whose duty it should be to present the subject of steam ferries across the Atlantic (Mann's proposal) to the people of their respective states and solicit stock for the same. Mr. Churchwell took the occasion to reprove the visionary and politically inclined delegates. If they came here to talk poli-

[31] Ibid., pp. 79-86.
[32] DeBow's Review, XXIII, 319, 415. Official Report, pp. 32-35.

tics then they had made a good start. But if the convention expected to build up Southern interests and establish an independent economic position they would have to stop their incessant dissertations. While they were talking and resolving, the men of the North were acting. They could not hope to maintain themselves in the South unless they adopted some measure to invite foreign capital to their shores. It was first necessary to build up a steam ferry from Norfolk or some other Southern port and free themselves from New York which was now reveling upon the trade that belonged to the South. Then they could begin to talk about independence.

Mr. W. C. Flournoy, of Virginia, supporting Mann's project, declared that if something of the kind were not adopted the convention would adjourn without having accomplished anything. He did not care whether Charleston, Mobile, Savannah, or New Orleans got a line of steamers so long as the Southern States were set free from Northern domination. If the warmer states became an independent confederacy, he believed the North would cease to prosper and would be happy to join the South. He was not afraid that the land of abolitionists would make war upon them and he was not afraid to let Northern reporters know just what the convention was up to. The Yankees must be told where and when to go.

Mr. Blount, of Alabama, opposed the proposition on the ground that it was fraught with great danger to Southern interest, that it was too costly and that it would prove unsuccessful. The South, he said, was purely an agricultural community, all her interests were agricultural, and it was these interests that they were called upon to cherish and protect, to further and promote.

Mr. Flournoy spoke again. He understood the convention had assembled to take steps toward establishing Southern independence and believed that Mann's scheme was a feasible means of effecting that desired object. He would not have people come all the way to Knoxville from Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, Carolina and Virginia merely to announce to the world that there was nothing for them to do.

His own object in coming to the convention was to do something to relieve the South from the position she occupied as the laughing stock of the Union. If the convention voted against Mr. Mann's project then he would know they meant to do nothing practical and he would never attend another Southern rights revival meeting. They had talked and talked about Southern independence until he was tired of it. The duty of the assembly was to declare that in the event of another infraction of the constitutional rights of the South, they would dissolve the Union; and the slave-holders should insist upon their rights regardless of offense to anyone.[33]

Mr. Churchwell's resolution endorsing Dudley Mann's scheme was ratified by the assembly. Southern commerce received further encouragement. The convention asked for public aid for commercial intercourse of the South with foreign nations and for the establishing of steamship lines. This resolution was opposed by the Mississippi, Alabama, and South Carolina delegations. It was decided that the foreign commerce of the South could succeed only if their citizens would temporarily sacrifice their capital to effect such an enterprise and again public aid was deemed necessary. Four states voted in the negative on this proposition: Mississippi, Alabama, South Carolina and Georgia.

Another resolution declared that the discrimination of the general government in favoring lines of foreign mail service starting from Northern ports was unwarranted and unjust; that the general government should grant encouragement to any Southern company that undertook to sustain lines of mail service. Mr. Pryor, of Virginia, moved to amend this by adding "but this convention does not approve the policy of Federal bounties to steamship lines." Mr. Lyons, of Virginia, said the resolution did not ask for bounties, that there was no difference between the constitutional authority of paying for mail service upon land and upon water. The duty of the government was to provide adequate mail facilities between this and other countries as between different portions of this

[33] Ibid., pp. 32-35.

country. The government furnished mail facilities to the North which were paid for most largely by the Southerners. What the proposition called for was that whatever mail facilities were given the North should also be given the South. Mr. Pryor thought special enactments of Congress granting exclusive and special privileges and bounties to particular steamship lines was in conflict with state rights principles. Mr. Boyce, of South Carolina, and Mr. Churchwell, of Tennessee, opposed the resolution. They wanted the postmaster general to make his own contracts and to let several lines come into competition with each other, selection being given to the lowest bidder. The resolution was however adopted.[34]

A committee appointed at Savannah to investigate the African slave trade reported that in their opinion, the time had not yet arrived for the consideration of the question, and the chairman was instructed to have this committee discharged from further obligations. Whereupon Mr. Spratt, of Charleston, moved that another committee be appointed in place of the one resigned to look into the matter of foreign slave trade and report at the next convention. By a vote of 44 to 45 the motion was rejected. (Yeas—Arkansas 4, Georgia 10, Mississippi 7, Louisiana 6, Alabama 9, South Carolina 8. Nays—Tennessee 12, North Carolina 10, Maryland 8, Virginia 15).

Mr. Spratt tried again:—Be it resolved:

> That the convention is not possessed of information sufficient, at the present time, for proper action on the subject of reopening the African slave trade, and with a view to such information, a committee be appointed to collect information in relation to the condition of the native African, upon the wants of the South, in respect to population and labor, and report the same at the next convention, to be held in Montgomery next May.

Defending the institution of slavery, Mr. Spratt held that "Society in its movements had taught and vindicated the truth that inequality was necessary to human progress. Countries become great from contact and collision between classes,—patrician and plebeian, peasant and peer." However,

[34] Ibid., pp. 72-77.

among equals in race inequality was wrong. The peer was no better than the peasant so the peer had fallen and the peasant had risen. The Declaration of Independence, announced Mr. Spratt, was founded upon an unfortunate misconception, and he now proclaimed the truth of inequality in opposition to the former notion. The Constitution of the United States did not declare that slave trade should not exist but that it should not be restricted before 1808. And even the law after that year referred to immigration in general and not to negroes alone, thus making immigration into the Northern States similarly unconstitutional. He didn't think Europe would go to war with the Southern States if the slave traffic were revived, for no power on earth had the right to dictate their policies. In conclusion, Mr. Spratt proposed that the whole subject be thoroughly discussed at the next convention.

Mr. Wamack, of Alabama, expressed surprise at the delicacy with which the members approached the slavery question, and called for more frankness. He believed the reopening of the slave trade would strengthen rather than dissolve the Union. In his opinion, England was against slavery because it was her desire to bring about a dissolution of this Union and he cited evidence. A distinguished lecturer in Edinburgh, Scotland, had said a few weeks ago that the only way to stop the giant strides of that monster Republic was to dissolve the Union, or the United States and Russia would before long be the only powers to give laws to the world. England, the prime mover against the slave trade, was called the most unmitigated hypocrite on earth, since her apprenticeship system was much worse than slavery. France too was about to commence the same system (apprentice), and if the South did not act now she would be behind time. In the wild jungles of Africa lived forty-three million slaves—low, degraded beings, content in summer with shade, in the winter with sunshine. These unfortunate creatures should be brought to America where they could learn to talk and act like men and even imitate their superiors, within limits of course. Growing wheat and corn did not require slave labor,

but with cotton, tobacco, rice and sugar it was indispensable. The African slave trade was not unconstitutional, maintained Mr. Wamack. It was not wrong in 1787 and was only deemed inexpedient in 1808, for at that time they hadn't yet conceived the revolution to be wrought by cotton. If the African slave trade were adopted, promised the speaker, the South would become the richest and most prosperous country ever warmed by the power of the sun.

Mr. Goggerty, Virginia, said the opening of the slave trade was required by civilization as a means of converting pagans to Christianity. However, they should examine the subject fully and if slavery and the trade were found to be really such evils as they were said to be, then slavery would have to be wiped out.

Mr. Lochrane, Georgia, was a man of action. He had regarded the Southern Commercial Convention as having heretofore dealt too much in words and too little in deeds, but the subject now before the house gave him hope that something practical might yet be done. The reopening of the African slave trade was proper, just, expedient and constitutional. Would war follow? Well, that was not a question for them to discuss. "If it is right do it then let consequences take care of themselves. I am not afraid of war—I would as soon appeal to Christian people to admit that there is a God, as to appeal to Southerners to acknowledge the morality of slavery."

Mr. O. P. Temple, Tennessee: Hundreds of thousands of foreigners were coming into the United States every year and not more than one or two fifths were settling in the South. The Black Republicans were recruiting these newcomers in their cause while the Southern population was losing one or two Congressmen every year. Mr. Temple would have restricted foreign immigration for the sake of slave institutions, and proposed, by way of amendment to Mr. Spratt's resolution, that a committee of five be appointed to report upon the subject of foreign immigration showing by statistics the extent of the loss to the South by the annual infusion of foreign-

ers in the North within the last fifteen years. The motion was laid on the table by a vote of 62 to 30, Tennessee, North Carolina, and Maryland upholding the resolution.

The subject of the African slave trade returned. Mr. Sneed, of Tennessee, requested the whole subject to be laid upon the table, but his motion was defeated. A final vote was taken on Mr. Spratt's resolution and the result was favorable to slave trade, 52 to 40. (Yeas—Arkansas 4, Georgia 10, Alabama 9, Mississippi 7, Louisiana 7, South Carolina 8, Maryland 8. Nays—Tennessee 12, North Carolina 10, Florida 3, Virginia 15).[35]

Another debate on the slave question was evoked when Mr. E. B. Bryan, of South Carolina, presented a resolution asking for the withdrawal of the United States squadron on the coast of Africa for the suppression of the slave trade. Mr. Bryan delivered a spacious address. The North and South, he said, were fighting a war of opinion and sentiment and opinion must therefore be their weapon. Vain apologies were no longer proper. If the slave trade were piracy, then a slave was plunder, and if it were piracy at any time it had to be piracy at all times. Until, therefore, slaveholders were prepared to acknowledge their slaves to be plunder they must deny that the slave trade by which they were acquired was piracy. The African squadron was moreover a conclusive failure. For five years following the date of its establishment there were exported from Africa 306,400 slaves. The next five years a larger number and the last five years a comparatively greater amount. And during all that time there had been some twenty-five or thirty British cruisers besides four or five American and those of other nations on the coast. There had consequently been no lack of force or of vigilance and the conclusion was manifest that the whole system, the entire plan of prohibition by means of a naval police on the coast was impracticable and should be abandoned. The slavers could not be caught and the would-be suppression could only cause loss of life and money. It was

[35] Ibid., pp. 88-92.

not Southern citizens who were importing slaves and fitting out slavers but Portuguese and Spaniards in Yankee vessels. Yet the South paid nearly two-thirds of the expenses of the government and aided in supporting a ridiculous naval force. The American squadron had not only failed to suppress the slave trade but the agreement with England to avoid or settle the question of search had been broken.

The people of the South, continued Mr. Bryan, should always keep in view the possibility or probability of their states one day becoming a separate Republic. Nothing should be overlooked which was calculated to promote their advancement and prevent misunderstandings with foreign powers, and he expected difficulties to spring out of the articles of the treaty concerning the African squadron. England was the avowed enemy of Southern civilization and Southern prosperity and the Northern States were said to be in actual political alliance, opposed to every measure beneficial to the South. If the present Union were dissolved, said the speaker, the Southern States would have active preparation to make, alliances to form, friendships to cultivate, a foreign policy to establish, and should therefore take into profound consideration the probable influence that would grow out of the British-American agreement on the African slave traffic. England would do her utmost to retard Southern progress but she would have to stand alone, for the Continental states were all her rivals in countless fields and were particularly unfriendly because of her radical tendencies. So the South need have no apprehension of danger from Great Britain when they decided to abrogate the slave trade agreement, nor would any European power be so impracticable and sentimental as to go to war over such an antiquated vagary as the suppression of slavery.

Mr. Gladney, of Mississippi, defended slavery, pointing out that the Bible was full of it, that ancient Hebrews, Abraham held slaves, that Christ and the Apostles never criticised such an institution, that the Decalogue mentioned servants which were similar to slaves, and finally slavery must there-

fore be right. And if slavery was not evil then slave trading which was only a transfer of slaves from one master to another was certainly not sinful.

Mr. Carroll, of South Carolina, and Mr. R. G. Payne, of Tennessee, were opposed to discussing the reopening of the slave trade although in favor of annulling the treaty with England. Mr. Payne said it was not the function of the convention to discuss the slave question. To advocate reopening of slave trade by insurrection would require a repeal of the Constitution which was not in accordance with the Southern mind and would go against the position they had always assumed. There were other more legitimate subjects to consider—schools, direct trade, internal improvements and railroads, and he advised the convention to drop the discussion about African negroes. Mr. Payne then appealed to the delegates from Virginia, his native state, to come forward and arouse the right spirit and push to completion those objects for which the convention assembled and which were attainable. They should stand by the Constitution and remain in the Union as long as there was no aggression forcing them to leave. "I tell you, gentlemen, the best way to advance the interests of the South, is to stop talking and grumbling and go to work. Emulate the Northern Yankees in one thing at least; talk less and work more, to attain that independence that will make the South the glory of the world."

A letter from William H. Chase, mayor of Pensacola, Florida, was read to the convention. The great labor problem of the age was alarming the civilized people of the world and was engaging the serious attention of associations, parliaments and congresses. There was only one way to restore the equilibrium between capital and labor, according to Mr. Chase, and that was by the addition of direct forced labor wherever there was trouble or a shortage. To obtain this forced labor recourse could be had to but five means: by contract with the Chinese; by contract with the East Indians; by contract with African chiefs and agents; by smuggling

slaves from Africa and by reopening the foreign slave trade. And all wise and experienced men had found and agreed that the most feasible of these plans was the reopening of the African slave trade.

Mr. Spratt spoke about the losses of South Carolina from migration to the West, about the scarcity of labor in his state, and pointed out the need of more slaves to provide non-owners with negroes in order to get their sympathy with the Southern cause. The African squadron was an utter failure. Not one slave, asserted Mr. Spratt, had ever been returned to Africa by the English. The negroes that were found aboard smugglers were usually taken to the West Indies, apprenticed for twenty-one years and subjected to a condition worse than slavery. To the United States it was a cost of one million dollars a year and the lives of one-fourth of those sent out to maintain the squadron on the coast of Africa.

There were delegates less precipitate. Mr. Sneed, of Tennessee, was opposed to the resolution of Mr. Bryan declaring it inexpedient and inopportune. His motion to protest against the reopening of the negro traffic was however defeated. Mr. Boyce, of South Carolina, said he would oppose the slave trade even if the South were an independent nation because its revival would probably bring all Europe and the North in war against the Southern States. Besides there was no material gain. No one could destroy the South's monopoly over the cotton crop. More negroes would only reduce the price of cotton, would create a danger of frequent uprisings, and such traffic would cause the South to lose the sympathy of the whole world.

Mr. Bryan's resolution requesting the recall of the American squadron from the coast of Africa was adopted by a vote of 66 to 26, Tennessee, North Carolina, and Maryland maintaining the minority.[36]

Mr. Page, of Alabama, asked the convention to approve the

[36] Ibid., pp. 36-39, 43-59. Charleston Courier, August 17, 19, 1857. Charleston Mercury, August 28, 1857. DeBow's Review, XXIII, 303, 319, 440.

course of General Walker in Nicaragua as a highly meritorious one and to disapprove the interference by the United States man-of-war *St. Mary*. Mr. Page said the South ought to sympathize with Walker's enterprise to introduce a system of African slavery in an unhappy and distracted land. He wanted the matter brought to the serious and earnest attention of Southern governors and Congressmen. The resolution was rejected by a vote of 25 to 60, Georgia, Louisiana and Alabama upholding Mr. Page.

Several miscellaneous resolutions were adopted by the convention.

1. The harbors of Port Royal, South Carolina, Mobile, Alabama, and Beaufort, North Carolina, should be fortified and made coaling stations for large steamers, and this measure should be brought to the consideration of Congress and to the heads of the Navy and War departments. 2. It was the duty of the Southern States to manufacture as far as practicable, all articles now purchased by them from Northern and Eastern States, and that patriotism should prompt Southerners to encourage and sustain such manufactures. 3. Southern people ought to encourage those merchants who deal in articles manufactured in the South or imported directly into it from abroad, in preference to those who deal in articles which are made or imported in Northern or Eastern States, and they ought under no circumstances transact business with a known abolitionist. 4. A committee was to be appointed to report on the manner and expense of selling cotton in the principal Southern markets which in their opinion would advance the interests of the planters in the sale, insurance, and repacking of cotton. 5. Laws granting bounties to those engaged in the northeastern fisheries should be repealed. 6. Southern State legislatures ought to consider the expediency of establishing a publishing house in some one of the cities of the South, in which enterprise the states should take stock and which should aim at advertising Southern institutions. 7. Agricultural, commercial, manufacturing associations were to be organized. 8. There should be an exclusive right to the Tehuantepec route and exclusive control of the isthmus in Central America, by the United States Government. 9. The general government should aid Arizona in organizing a territorial government. 10. Congress was urged to procure the repeal or reduction of the duties on American raw and manufactured tobacco. 11. The cultivation of the grape should be more extended in the Southern States.[37]

The convention then adjourned to the Tennessee Deaf and Dumb Asylum where there were to be many more speeches and where a savory supper awaited the delegates and friends. About two thousand persons assembled within the walls of the

[37] Official Report, Proceedings, pp. 39, 40, 88, 92-94.

Asylum to dance and make merry and champagne was said to have flowed like water till early in the morning.[38]

The Knoxville convention was favored with little comment in the papers. One editor called the delegates "Utopian theorists of the South," enjoying Tennessee hospitality, the freedom of railroads, assembled to debate, resolve, dine and drink and gasconade about a dissolution of the Union. The proceedings were all disapproved as being either mischievous, absurd or empty dreams. The people did not object to connecting Southern waters with European ports but Dudley Mann's proposition was an impracticable scheme.[39] A Virginian thought just as much could have been accomplished without the meeting and the affair he described as unmitigated humbug and trusted it was the last of the convention.[40]

Northern papers ironically referred to the convention as that "eminently practical body." The slave trade resolutions were considered as a disposition on the part of the South to invite a fierce political conflict and as an attempt to force the issue between the sections. As for the convention as a whole, they thought it was a lamentable display of ignorance full of crude fancies and childish desires. The South's longing for a peculiar literature could never be realized as long as there was a severe censorship of the press, pulpit and public. It was incredible that such grotesque schemes, suitable for citizens of Siam could emanate from an enlightened nation in the nineteenth century.[41]

But down in the very warm and amiable black belt it was believed that the South was fulfilling her destiny, that academies, colleges, universities and professors were becoming more Southern and more books were being published.[42] It wouldn't matter who made their shoes but they must make their own books. The proud old slave and land holders still held that agriculture was their work and warned the

[38] Richmond Enquirer, August 19, 1857.
[39] Baltimore American, August 20, 1857.
[40] Quoted in Baltimore American, August 20, 1857.
[41] New York Times, August 19, 26, 1857.
[42] DeBow's Review, XXIII, 340.

people against shopkeeping and against free labor and concentrated capital of the middle classes. Mr. DeBow, the champion of the commercial convention now realized that money would after all flow from the less profitable to the more profitable investment. Southern gentlemen would not emulate the English hawker, pedler and drummer since those pursuits were unbecoming to aristocratic taste and talent. And the conventions were no longer commercial stimulants or agencies but they were invaluable as a most potent means of uniting the South and preparing her for that crisis that might soon arise. Enlightened conservatives, able and patriotic men were the members of these assemblies. The world was deluded. The majority of the North was radical and revolutionary. The Pope of Rome was a wild reformer, Louis Napoleon and Queen Victoria were semi-socialists and Henry, the French Bourbon heir, was outright red. The South was the only conservative section of Christendom, the only country content with its institutions, content with its society, at peace with itself.

CHAPTER X

Politicians in Control, and the End

Twenty years had now passed since the first Southern commercial convention had assembled in Augusta and from that time to the present there had been some twelve meetings, all but one or two of which were primarily economic in motive. Innumerable resolutions and a like number of speeches had brilliantly set forth the South's need of commerce, manufactures, capital, of home education and loyal literature, and the minds of many eminent Southern men had been absorbed in these annual demonstrations, though to very little avail. Now, in 1858 at Montgomery the rabid politicians were to assume control of the convention and to convert it into a completely political debating society. The delegates were served with well seasoned food for reflection in the following piquant and convincing portrayal of their journey to Montgomery:

> They will start in some stage or railroad coach made in the North; an engine of Northern manufacture will take their train or boat along; at every meal they will sit down in Yankee chairs, to a Yankee table, spread with a Yankee cloth. With a Yankee spoon they will take from Yankee dishes sugar, salt, and coffee which have paid tribute to Yankee trade, and with Yankee knives and forks they will put into their mouths the only thing Southern they will get on the trip.
>
> At night they will pull off a pair of Yankee boots with a Yankee boot-jack; and throwing a lot of Yankee toggery on a Yankee chair, lie down to dream of Southern independence, in a Yankee bed, with not even a thread of cotton around them that has not gone through a Yankee loom or come out of a Yankee shop.
>
> In the morning they will get up to fix themselves by a 12 x 14 Yankee looking-glass, with a Yankee brush and comb, after perhaps washing off a little of the soil of the South from their faces, with water drawn in a Yankee bucket, and put in a Yankee pitcher, on a Yankee wash-stand, the partner in honorable exile with a lot of Yankee wares that make up the sum of the furniture.[1]

This woeful state of subservience was admitted by the conventionists but they decided that economic freedom could

[1] DeBow's Review, XXIV, 573.

not be attained without political independence. Accordingly the following topics were proposed for discussion at Montgomery:

1. The revival of the African slave trade. 2. Filibustering expeditions conforming to the plans of Gen. William Walker. 3. The Kansas altercation. 4. A purely Southern system of literature, schools and colleges. 5. Direct trade with Europe. 6. Discriminating taxes and licenses against produce and manufactures of the Northern States. And should all these expedients fail to secure Southern rights and equality there would follow a seventh subject for deliberation, viz; Disunion and a Southern Confederacy.[2]

In May 1858, the immense number of delegates and visitors came together in a vast cotton warehouse which was floorless and roofless and surrounded by a thick brick wall. Ten Southern States sent representatives—South Carolina, Mississippi, Georgia, Alabama, Louisiana, Texas, Florida, Tennessee, North Carolina and Virginia. William Walker, of Nicaragua notoriety, and John Mitchell, an eminent Irish exile, who were in the city at the time were invited to attend, and they came and were seated among the delegates.[3]

The meeting was unofficially started by the temporary chairman, William L. Yancey, of Alabama, with an address to "My countrymen of the South." In behalf of the city of Montgomery he welcomed the delegates assembled to invigorate Southern commerce and to stimulate general industry. They were more passionately welcomed as a foreshadow of that far more important body, that, "if injustice and wrong shall continue to rule the hour and councils of the dominant section of this country, must ere long assemble upon Southern soil" to devise measures by which not only their industrial but social and political relations would be placed upon the basis of an independent sovereignty. Then they would have a unity of climate, a unity of soil, a unity of production and a unity of social relations—the only basis of a successful and permanent government. These words were loudly approved by the audience.

[2] Richmond Enquirer, May 13, 1858. New York Herald, May 14, 1858.

[3] Richmond Enquirer, May 14, 1858.

Mr. A. P. Calhoun, of South Carolina, was elected to preside and a young Alabamian, Mr. P. D. Page, was chosen as the secretary. Upon taking the chair, Mr. Calhoun congratulated the large collection of Southern energy and talent that was before him and that assembled annually to interchange thought and sentiment, and he hoped the South would now unite in a vast resolution to achieve independence within or without the Union.[4]

The business committee which was due to report on the progress of the South regretted to have occasion to announce to the public that thus far its hopes in the efficacy of the commercial convention had not been realized. They recommended, however, an idea of Mr. Edmund Ruffin (Virginia) to put power in the hands of an executive committee and council representing a permanent and stable Southern organization. Mr. Ruffin's plan was to form a league of United Southerners, who, keeping up their old party relations on all other questions would hold the Southern issue paramount, and would influence parties, legislatures and statesmen to defend and secure the constitutional and legal rights and interests of the Southern States. It would strive to induce and promote inquiry and discussion and thus arrive at and make known correct conclusions on these subjects. Membership in the association was to be open to any friendly citizen. A number of members might organize themselves into a club and the clubs were all to be affiliated. Every club would send delegates to a general council which would have an executive committee. This was to be a standing committee to act through the interval between sessions; and other committees were to consider severally and report upon each of the great questions of public policy in which the most important interests of the South were involved, and had been most subjected to injury. They should spread this information throughout the South by an extensive propaganda and educate the people as to their great needs for a successful defense and future maintenance of Southern principles and

[4] Charleston Mercury, May 11, 1858.

institutions. This organization, in the opinion of Mr. Ruffin, would have been a suitable means of bringing together the minds and wills of all true and patriotic men for consultation, for concert and for combined action, for the defense and welfare of the South.

Mr. Jones, of Georgia, presented a resolution, recommending to the governors of the Southern States, or to such of them as should agree, to call on the people of their respective states to elect delegates, equal to their representation in Congress, to meet in a convention at an appointed time "to take into consideration the present critical position of the South and the dangers that threaten her in the future and to endeavor to devise, if possible, effectual safeguards for her future security and equality in the Union, or failing in that to go out of it." The resolution was declared inexpedient.[5]

The subject of the Nicaragua enterprise was broached. Mr. Percy Walker, of Alabama, was of the opinion that the establishment of Americans in Nicaragua was a work of duty no less than of honor and interest on the part of the Southern people. It was of paramount importance since it tended to increase Southern commerce and political power. Furthermore, the Federal Government attempted to suppress emigration to Central America from the South while it permitted it from the North; which was obviously a perversion of constitutional authority, an unlawful and unjust assumption of power. Mr. Walker further declared that the Southern people ought to repudiate the wrongs and insults perpetrated on their former countrymen by the acts of Commander Davis and Commodore Paulding; and ought accordingly to warn the Federal Government that further persistence in such action would not only render the government repugnant to the people of the states and contemptible to foreign nations, but would most certainly dissolve the Union itself. Mr. Hayne, of South Carolina, disagreed with the gentleman from Alabama as to the importance of the question, believing

[5] Richmond Enquirer, May 19-21, 1858. DeBow's Review, XXV, 459.

that threats and menaces on the part of the South should be postponed until they were in a situation to put them into execution. In reply, Mr. Walker said it was a fact evident to all, that the only way in which the South could extend her territory and institutions, was by way of Central America, and from there northward toward the United States. This was a question inseparable from any slave policy the South might have in view. Mr. Shepherd, of Alabama, stated that the only battle that had been fought and the only blood that had been shed for the institutions of the Southern States had been fought and shed upon the fields of Central America, and for that reason the Nicaragua enterprise ought to be supported. Mr. Hunter, of Georgia, thought the question was inappropriate and that such matters belonged to the jurisdiction of the Federal Government only. A resolution was then adopted by a unanimous state vote. It deemed the Nicaragua undertaking very important, condemned the acts of the United States navy as above stated, and advised the Federal Government to desist from such further conduct lest it become odious in the eyes of the South. At the suggestion of Mr. Belser, of Alabama, an advocated threat of secession was not mentioned in the measure.[6]

At Knoxville, the previous year, a committee had been appointed to report on the policy of reopening the African slave trade. Mr. L. W. Spratt, of Charleston, was chairman and William L. Yancey and Roger A. Pryor were other prominent members. Mr. Spratt, it appeared, had prepared the paper with little assistance from his colleagues and the latter were not conversant with its contents until it had been read to the assembly.[7]

The report opened with a defense of the righteousness of slavery. Mankind is unequal, for the powerful always assume the higher station. There had been slaves in the past and there would be slaves in the future. Then there must be slave trade, and if negroes might be bought and sold within

[6] Charleston Mercury, May 18, 1858.
[7] DeBow's Review, XXIV, 578.

American borders, why not in Africa? Slavery was the common condition of negroes in Africa. Was not a slave in civilized America better off than one in pagan Africa? And was the life of a freeman in Africa pleasing? In answer to the latter question the report displayed a vivid account of the brutal barbarity of African society, conclusively demonstrating that native life in the Congo was by no means attractive. Negroes coming to a state of slavery in the South, regardless of what class they had been in, were ennobled. They were elevated to a sphere of greater usefulness as well as greater comfort and well being. To rise from depravity in the jungles to a life of service in a civilized community was a blessing to the negro.

Now what were the effects of the foreign slave trade upon the fortunes of the South, asked Mr. Spratt. Their great want was population. It was necessary to political power, and political power was necessary to the preservation of liberty. The majority governed and the North had the majority. The North had an excess of population and thereby controlled the fortunes of the South in Congress. The slave trade would give them political power. For every five slaves that were brought they acquired the right to a representation for three persons in the national legislature and it would therefore directly and necessarily increase their relative representative power. But to attain power they must also have states, and experience had shown that there was no way of taking slave territory without slaves. Foreign slave trade would give them population, would give them power of extension to vacant territory; it would draw foreign enterprise to its embrace, foreign capital to its support; and they would be enabled to whip the North in every way. The foreign slave trade would provide the South with abundant labor for the fields and for the arts and would increase the value of real property while competition would increase the value of every other product. The price of cotton would be reduced to a level with other staples but not too low and the Southern dependence on one crop, a dangerous and grave misfortune,

would cease. The poorer men would be supplied with slaves, thus rendering it possible for all to become slave owners, strengthening the institution and abolishing the odious distinction between slave owners and non-slave owners. In this way their capacity for production would increase.

Mr. Spratt allayed all fear for trouble of a physical nature from too many slaves. The negroes had been peaceful in the past and would not be allowed the slightest liberty of revolt; nor would European morals be aroused when the South resumed her slave trading. Besides, asked Mr. Spratt, were foreign states really tender on the score of human rights. England crushed India; France, Algeria; Russia, Prussia and Austria had parted Poland, and if he had to look for European morality in their history he would always find that "power is virtue, and weakness the only crime." Furthermore, Europe was not hostile to the spread of slavery in the South but rather antagonistic to this Union and always saw a rival in American productive institutions.

What effect would the African slave trade have on the Union? It would deprive the North of her preponderance of political power, and political tradesmen of that section were therefore opposed to slave trade, although the mercantile and commercial interests should dream of richer fields for operation when the negro traffic was revived. To the manufacturing interests it would furnish more cotton and a wider market for their fabrics. Interest, not sentiment gave tendency to political action and those interests being favorable, could control the North. The people of the colder states loved power but only for the profits they could get out of it. If they could be shown the material benefits of the African slave trade they too would boost its revival. That was the only condition upon which the Union should be preserved. In addition to the foregoing report, Mr. Spratt proposed for adoption the following resolutions:

1. "Slavery is right, and being right there can be no wrong in the natural means to its formation." 2. The reopening of the foreign slave trade was an expedient and

proper policy and ought to be endorsed and fostered by the convention. 3. A committee should be appointed to consider ways and means of carrying the measure into effect.[8]

Mr. Yancey, of Alabama, advocated the adoption of these resolutions. The laws prohibiting the slave trade, he claimed, had restricted the expansion of Southern labor and tended to keep down the prices of Southern lands. They were discriminatory against the South, detrimental to her most vital institution, and obstructing to her material prosperity. Northern labor received an annual stimulus of thousands of white workmen while Southern labor was prohibited from expansion. More slave states were prevented from being admitted into the Union, thus creating a powerful and sectional majority. The laws were violative of the Constitution, unjust, and insulting to the Southern States.

Mr. Pryor, of Virginia, advised the convention not to enter into so serious an enterprise. At first he had been in favor of the idea of reopening the slave trade, but after sober study he had decided that the policy was utterly repugnant to grave and sensible men, contrary to the wishes of their constituents and contrary to the cause they sought to promote. They should not be influenced by impulses of fancy or fanaticism but should consult the light of reason. Nor was he convinced that Southern material interests would be benefited. If the South needed more population to defeat the political schemes of the North they should import white people, not negroes. Besides mere people were not a real source of political and social strength and a dense population was not always compatible with a free government.

It had been said that the South wanted more labor, the report having maintained that unless the South increased its production the factory owners would have to go elsewhere for their supply. All other lands had tried and failed miserably to compete with the South in cotton production and now the Southern States had the monopoly and the world could not wrest it from them. The greatest possible minimum of labor employed in the production of cotton could bring the greatest

[8] Ibid., XXIV, 473. Richmond Enquirer, May 24, 1858.

maximum of profit, and every man in the South was interested in high prices for cotton, not low. It was therefore to their interest that the minimum supply of labor be employed in its production compatible with the demand. An excess supply of cotton was the greatest evil of the cotton producing states.

Mr. Pryor could not agree with Spratt's contention that enlarging the basis of slavery would strengthen the system and he denied that gentleman's statement that there was a large class of citizens in the South inimical to its institutions. (Referring to non-slaveholders in border states) The speaker assured the convention that "If the charge be sounded today for the citizens of Virginia, Alabama, and the other states to rally to the defence of the South, there would be no recreant heart except perhaps, some Yankee emigree." (Applause). He contended that the South was a united people and he prayed that this question might not make them a disunited people. Southerners, he said, could espouse slavery even if they were not pecuniarily interested in it.

Mr. Spratt had predicted that the civilized negro would serve in the household or be employed in the mechanic arts while the others could go to the field. In Virginia, said Mr. Pryor, the greatest curse of their domestic economy was the excessive household labor. And he believed the mechanic arts were incongruous with the habits and nature of the negro. As a rule the blacks were not skillful workmen nor was it to the South's interests that negroes be so employed. In the first place such work required training, accomplishment, and instruction which would give the slave opportunity to brood, meditate and ferment discontent, and also the white mechanics would certainly resent the blacks' competition. Concentration of slavery not diffusion would strengthen that institution, and the difference between Missouri and South Carolina was offered as an example. If the negro slave was to be placed within the possession of the poorest citizens, the price of those already in the country would have to be reduced, and if the price of slaves were reduced one-half or one-third they might

as well abolish slavery altogether. The value of a slave was the same as his productive value and the only way to reduce his price was to reduce his utility, for when cotton and other slave products were high, the price of slaves was high.

The policy advocated in the report, resumed Mr. Pryor, was and ought to be impracticable. The South was committed by the action of their forefathers to give the Federal Government unconditional and absolute control over the African slave trade. It was absurd to believe that the Federal Government could ever be persuaded to renew that traffic and to open the trade by action of the several Southern States would be an act of bad faith subversive to the Constitution, which must be upheld as long as the Union. They required others to be loyal to the Federal laws and as honorable men they ought to do the same thing themselves. Another objection to agitating this subject was that by committing themselves to the policy they sacrificed friends in the North and divided the National Democratic party. Furthermore, the proposition, if endorsed, would shock the moral sentiment of Christendom which was becoming one on the issue and "those who profess to be Christians should not throw the gauntlet in the face of the Christian world." The speaker was also opposed to introducing a horde of barbarians from Africa among civilized Americans.

The real motive of the scheme to revive the African slave trade, averred Mr. Pryor, was a desire to dissolve the Union, since it could not be carried out while the Union existed. If the proposition were fearlessly and openly made, Virginia, though a border state would not shrink from her duty.

> But Virginia was unwilling to put the perpetuity of this Union upon any such issue as this proposition to kidnap cannibals upon the coast of the Congo, and contend with the King of Dahomey, in the marts of wild Africa, for the purchase of slaves. If you intend dissolution, declare it boldly and manfully. Present your proposition with your preamble and resolutions, and we will meet you upon it, and either acquiesce and go with you heartily and zealously, or give our reasons for not doing so.

Mr. John A. Jones, of Georgia, asked: "Will the gentle-

man go, go now, today, for a dissolution of the Union?" (Applause).

Mr. Pryor retorted that he would not take a position outside of the Union until the South was completely united. "Give me a case of oppression and tyranny sufficient to justify a dissolution of the Union, and give me a united South, and then I am willing to go out of the Union." (Applause).

Mr. Jones declared that if the gentleman from Virginia had to wait for an undivided South he would never secede.

Mr. Pryor returned: "I will not so stigmatize any state, or any class of my fellow citizens, by believing that when a case arises sufficient to justify a dissolution of the Union, any state of the South will stand back. In no case has the Old Dominion ever been recreant to her duty." He wished to remind the people that the first onset, in case of war would have to be met by Virginia, and one must not expect of her the same inordinate enthusiasm felt by others not as vulnerably situated as she was. But the border states were true and loyal, he vouched for it. "Virginia will not disparage the memory of her illustrious heroes.—If there is to be a disseverance of the Union, let there be no disseverance of the South.—Let us collect our energies for the final struggle, so that when it comes the entire South may precipitate herself upon the foe, like a thunderbolt from heaven, with irresistable effect."

Mr. William L. Yancey, of Alabama, arose to speak against the Federal prohibition of the foreign slave trade. He believed that the true reason for Pryor's opposition to the report of the committee was that gentleman's fear of the effect it would have upon Northern friends. "God save us from such friends. Have their fidelity and friendship been exhibited in the recent passage of the conference bill concerning Kansas?"

Here Mr. Pryor rose to a point of order, declaring the Kansas bill was not before the convention, although he was ready to prove that Clay, Davis and Hunter had not sacri-

ficed the interests of the South. The president, however, decided it was in order to refer to that subject in reply to the arguments of the gentleman from Virginia.

Mr. Yancey resumed. It was not his intention, he said, to discuss the Kansas bill but merely to refer to it as evidence that it was the South who usually made the sacrifice. In defending their native land the assembly were told not to be hampered by the effect their actions would have on friends in the North. The great distinction between the two sections was the peculiar institution of the South. That distinctive system had given rise to continuous discrimination upon the nation's statute book, had divided churches, had broken that Christian unity bequeathed by the Savior of mankind. The speaker did not love every part of the Union equally but loved first that section which was nearest to him. The Union was already dissolved by oppression and fraud and he was prepared to shed every drop of blood in his heart to defend Southern rights. The law which discriminated against the slave labor of the South must be repealed, he declared. Was there any man from Alabama who did not endorse that sentiment? "Congress shall enact no law prohibiting the emigration or importation of such persons as the states now allow, before the year 1808." That very clause, Mr. Yancey asserted, was a constitutional guarantee of slavery and slave trade because it forbade Congress to interfere with it before 1808. The law of 1807 prohibiting the importation of slaves after 1808 was unconstitutional in its discrimination against the South.

The Alabama orator continued. They were all indebted to Thomas Jefferson, a Virginian, for the conception of abolitionism, and that philosopher had acquired the red republican spirit from the great field of the French Revolution. The doctrine that the black was equal to the white man was spread in Virginia by Jefferson and from him it was transmitted to father and son, and Virginia was even yet not quite converted, for in no other Southern state could an abolition colony be established. These ideas prevailed in that state in

1807 and so that unconstitutional law was passed. Now, said Mr. Yancey, it was a misdemeanor to import slaves and thus the North got all the labor she needed under the head of immigration while the South was forbidden to import the needed negroes. If it were right to raise slaves to sell, was it not right to import them; and if slaves might be purchased in Virginia, why not in Africa? Mr. Yancey then showed how the South had been affected by the Federal discrimination. The number of slaves had increased from one million to four million since the Revolution. The North had an average annual immigration of 350,000 and some years the immigration had reached 600,000. These newcomers colonized Northern territories and that section now numbered sixteen free states to fifteen slave states.

He would not propose to re-establish the slave trade at once but desired the repeal of the discriminating slave laws and to let the problem be solved by the principle of supply and demand. The renewal of the trade would not depreciate the price of the present slave labor nor the price of land, nor would it conflict with the interest of the poor white. The negro market would be governed precisely as the horse, mule, corn and cotton markets were governed—by the law of supply and demand. It was a mistaken idea to suppose that the price of slaves would depreciate, for their price depended upon other causes. And it was not to the interest of planters to keep up high prices of slaves, but rather to obtain cheap labor to raise their produce at a minimum cost, and they were concerned only over the price of the produce. Only speculators and those who wanted to sell negroes were out to keep up the price. There was no danger that the price of cotton would depreciate, for more was being produced than ever before, and yet the cotton business had never been so profitable.

Mr. Yancey then answered Pryor's argument that sparseness of population was strength. If that were true, said the Alabamian, then they ought to export all their negroes, except the smallest possible number, and also all the white men

in order to attain the highest point of prosperity. The gentleman from Virginia had also maintained that the less the planters produce, the greater the profit. In that case it would be advisable that instead of producing four million bags of cotton they should reduce the production to say, one bag. Mr. Yancey maintained that the value of land would not depreciate if there were more slaves. The reason the rich and fertile lands of the South brought less in the market than the sterile lands of New England and New York was the South's lack of labor to develop the latent wealth. To strengthen the institution of slavery they should show the non-slaveholding citizens that a negro could be bought for $200 and in a few years by care and instruction would be worth a thousand dollars. By teaching the poor white man that wealth and happiness lay in slaveholding they could recruit much more sympathy for the Southern cause. The convention had been advised not to assert the rights of the South upon the slave trade. Mr. Yancey asked: "Will the gentleman from Virginia say what is the issue upon which the South should contest their rights?"

And Mr. Pryor replied: "Should a Black Republican president be installed in the executive chair in Washington, and the power of the government be palpably in his hands," and if the South was sufficiently satisfied to justify the movement, then he was willing to secede and would pledge Virginia not to be behind Alabama. Further, if Alabama's reason for leaving was agreed to by others, if there was sufficient cause for all Southern States to leave the Union, Virginia would follow.

Mr. Yancey said it was folly to talk about a united South, that someone would have to make the sacrifice. He then protested against Southern representatives in Congress who, he believed, wrongly understood the Southern mind and were not doing what was expected of them. The speaker's conclusion was emotional: "Let us look no longer to the North for assistance. Let us turn our faces to the South. Are you ready, countymen? Is your courage up to the high-

est point? Have you prepared yourselves to enter upon the great field of self-denial as your fathers did, and undergo, if necessary, another seven years' war in order that you and your posterity may enjoy the blessings of liberty? If you are, I am with you; if you are not, I am not with you."

There were loud cheers and prolonged applause. It seems that Mr. Yancey by his wonderful display of eloquence, much of which has been omitted from the above account, electrified his audience, determined the motif of the meeting and converted it into a secession convention.

The speech had also aroused some ill feeling among a few delegates who believed the speaker had intimated that Virginia's attitude was influenced by motives of self-interest in regard to the slave trade question.[9] Mr. Edmund Ruffin replied at some length to the remarks of Mr. Yancey, declaring that 99 out of 100 slaveholders in Virginia desired to retain their slaves and those that sold them did so only under necessity. He was opposed to the report of the slave trade committee.

Mr. Robert G. Scott, of Alabama, offered a substitute for the resolutions reported from the committee upon the subject of reopening the African slave trade. It declared that it was inexpedient for the convention to take any action either by recommending a repeal of the existing laws or otherwise. Mr. Scott deplored the fact that the convention was becoming divided and he designed to heal the wounds which the past debate had inflicted upon the cause of the South. He had always thought that this body was a commercial convention but had now witnessed its conversion into a political debating club, to discuss questions that their constituencies never wanted them to consider. His people never would have commanded him to come here to strike down their friends who have always been true to the South. What they needed was unity and strength for 1860 when their Northern adversaries would triumph by putting into power Seward and his followers. Was the South ready? (Cries of "yes, yes", "as ready

[9] J. W. DuBose, The Life and Times of W. L. Yancey, p. 359.

as we ever will be"), and the honored old state of Virginia would be right with us, came back Mr. Scott. But the African slave trade, he believed, was only a side issue, one of mere dollars and cents and should not be espoused as the cause for secession. They should rather find a greater question of principle upon which the South would stand united before the world. The question of the slave trade could only divide the South and imperil their cause. In his opinion, the law prohibiting foreign slave traffic was not unconstitutional but fell in the same legal category as the regulation of foreign commerce.

Mr. Hilliard, of Alabama, was the next speaker for the conservatives. He was not prepared to go for secession upon exciting issues with the Federal Government, upon visionary and doubtful policies, but the time had come for the South to decide whether she would resist aggression upon her institutions or give them up, and he was confident they would all unite whenever Northern encroachment became sufficiently palpable. But, Mr. Hilliard believed, there were hopeful indications that the general government would hereafter preserve the integrity of the Constitution. The laws prohibiting African slave trade were constitutional, in his opinion; though he would not say they were judicious. Mr. Spratt's resolution was impracticable policy and if adopted, would be an invitation to fanatics and anti-Southerners to agitate for the overthrow of the slavery system. Mr. Hilliard further objected to the slave trade because it would introduce a horde of wild and dangerous barbarians in the United States; it would depreciate the value of cotton by increasing the supply, and instead of being king, cotton would have to go a-begging in the markets of the world. He was not prepared to abandon the Union for existing causes of complaint, but in his judgment the election of a Black Republican to the presidency would result in the subversion of the government and the dissolution of the Union. Finally, if the Southern people must secede let them do so as a united people.

Mr. Preston, of Virginia, was another prominent speaker

who opposed Spratt's slave trade report. This issue, he said, would result in a division of sentiment among the people of the South and their greatest needs for the present were union and harmony. He also upheld the constitutionality of the slave trade laws and he spoke of the part played by the Southerners, Jefferson, Madison and Pinckney in framing the Constitution. "These gentlemen," said Mr. Preston, "would not have sanctioned a law that placed the brand of Cain upon the forehead of the South, and stamps her with dishonor throughout the world." The law of 1821 authorizing the employment of a naval force upon the coast of Africa to suppress the slave traffic was passed by a Democratic Congress, while James Monroe was president and William H. Crawford and John C. Calhoun were two of his advisers in the cabinet. "Shall we now say that our ancestors were dull, obtuse, incomprehensive, and negligent of the rights of the South, insensible to degredation, and willing to bear the brand and dishonor before Christendom? Not so." Mr. Preston admitted that Yankees had the high places in the synagogue, the seats of honor at the table, while the South was assigned the obscure and humble seats; but he hoped such a position would always be occupied by Southern representatives so that they might not be exposed to the seductive influence and allurements of official patronage. With the exception of eight or ten members the entire Southern delegation in the lower house of Congress had at a recent session resolved that it was "inexpedient, unwise, and contrary to the settled policy of the country to reopen the African slave trade." To attack and overturn these opinions was unwise and inexpedient and Mr. Spratt's recommendation was impracticable and impossible of realization. In conclusion, Mr. Preston protested against a former speaker's accusation of the commonwealth of Virginia and of those who represented her as being motivated by pecuniary interest. They were in the minority, he said, but they were united.

Mr. Yancey expressed his regret that some of his remarks had offended the gentlemen from Virginia and politely apolo-

gized, although he said his words had been misconstrued. Referring again to the constitutionality of the slave laws, Mr. Yancey said it was true that at the time the laws were passed it was not known that they would injuriously affect the South, and were therefore not thought to be repugnant to the spirit of the Constitution. But conditions had changed considerably. Was not the Missouri Compromise considered constitutional for more than thirty years and approved by Monroe and Calhoun? Yet in 1857 the Supreme Court declared it to be unconstitutional. The present generation with all the benefits of scientific discovery and progress and with a greater knowledge of social, political and moral economy were better able to judge what was right and proper for the interests of the South than were the reverent fathers, however intelligent and noble they might have been in their days. Prohibiting commerce was not regulating it, contended Mr. Yancey; and if Congress might regulate and prohibit commerce between domestic and foreign states then she had the power to prohibit the internal slave trade of the South. These laws had indeed violated the spirit of the Constitution if not the letter. And on what matters were the Southern States united, asked Mr. Yancey. What was the people's judgment, and what was the duty of the South? Let the convention determine at once.

Mr. Spratt, of South Carolina, closed the debate. His report had held that the South was right in her institutions, and being right, she was justified in pursuing any legitimate course to maintain and extend them. Since population was power in the United States there should be population sufficient at least, to sustain the rights of the South in the government. The committee felt it was necessary to devise some means by which non-slaveholding citizens of the South should from motives of material interest be led to entertain a more favorable feeling toward the peculiar institution. The report had also urged the necessity for an increase of labor in the South, not to be employed in producing cotton alone but in other various fields of enterprise which would be fostered

in the Southern States, and which would receive the attention of capitalists if suitable inducements were granted. The object of this move was to afford men in the slave states an opportunity to advance their fortunes in desirable and fitting lines of pursuits, which would identify them with the safety and progress of Southern institutions. Mr. Spratt did not believe non-slaveholders were as true to the interests of the South as those who owned slaves, and he alluded to conditions in Delaware, Maryland and Western Virginia.

Mr. Pryor arose to defend the loyalty of Western Virginia. Mr. Spratt then asked if the people of that section were willing to let slave labor compete with them in the mechanic arts. Mr. Pryor answered that they were and mentioned the fact that the abolitionist, Eli Thayer and his followers had been driven out from two or three counties and that his colony was already broken up. But Mr. Spratt was not convinced and again avowed that Western Virginia was unwilling to have slave labor compete with free and that such was the case in other places. He was, however, in favor of postponing the whole matter to the next convention since the public mind was not yet sufficiently assertive. It was therefore decided by the assembly to print the report of the slave trade committee and to propagate it throughout the South.[10]

It was now 1858 and times had changed, and so did the convention. Commerce was no longer the avowed purpose of these annual gatherings. At Montgomery direct trade with its concomitant capitalistic interests was forgotten and even the peculiar Southern education and literature failed to be recognized. In the past, harmonious subjects had always been sought for and reached but at Montgomery conflict seemed to be invited and even mutual crimination was entertained. The support of the border states was alienated and the controversy between Mr. Pryor and Mr. Yancey, started at the convention, was later resumed in the press and aroused bitter

[10] Proceedings in Charleston Mercury, May 13, 15, 18, 1858. Richmond Enquirer, May 19, 20, 21, 24, 1858. DeBow's Review, XXIV, 578 ff.

feeling against Mr. Yancey among many Virginians.[11] To question the fidelity of the Old Dominion to Southern institutions was provoking, and it gave the occasion for much acrimonious comment. It was time to cease holding these pseudo-commercial conventions—degenerated conclaves seeking the dissolution of the Union, wrote a Virginia editor. It was useless to discuss the African slave trade because that traffic could not be renewed within the Union, and it was folly for the South to secede on that score because they could not unite on such an issue. Moreover,

> If a dissolution of the Union is to be followed by the revival of the slave trade, Virginia had better consider whether the South of the Northern confederacy would not be far more profitable for her than the North of a Southern confederacy. In the Northern confederacy, Virginia would derive a larger amount from the sale of her slaves to the South and gain the increased value of her lands from the Northern emigration—while in the Southern confederacy with the African slave trade revived, she would lose two-thirds of the value of her slave property, and derive no additional increase to the value of her lands.[12]

Some of the public were apparently becoming weary and bored by these "mountebank exhibitions" which only manifested the folly and false pretense of a disunion congress. In the opinion of one gentleman, these meetings had at one time been amusing, but were now nonsensical and even contemptuous, and he hoped the convention had expired at Montgomery.[13] Mr. DeBow was arraigned as a reckless leader of this movement, the object of which, long concealed under a fraudulent name, was now exposed to the public. Whenever the South wanted to dissolve the Union all she would have to do would be to reassemble the Southern Commercial Convention which met at Montgomery and the shot would be fired. Even the hotel keepers at the seat of Alabama received critical consideration. They were called the most unmerciful profiteers this side of San Francisco. The only good derived from these bogus commercial conventions and their incessant incendiary harangues was in that they served as escape valves

[11] DuBose, Life and Times of W. L. Yancey, pp. 359 ff.
[12] Richmond Enquirer, May 24, 1858.
[13] Baltimore American, May 20, 1858.

for gassy bodies that would otherwise burst.[14] As to the personnel of the body, they were "restless politicians, briefless barristers, doctors without patients, editors in quest of subscribers, and individuals astride of hobbies." A great field had been open before the convention, to regulate commercial interests of a great people but there came a "tatterdermalion set" a "rapscallion crew" unrepresentative of the South and now the public was disgusted with the convention and all its work.[15]

Nevertheless, some good had resulted. They had learned that nothing could be done to change the course of American commerce, that direct trade between the South and Europe was an impossibility, that Norfolk, Charleston, Savannah, Mobile, were only suburbs of New York. And to know one's condition is the first requisite for altering it. Another great end achieved by these conventions was a better knowledge of the true interests of the South, that she was powerless to reopen the African slave trade. But their greatest attainment was doubtless the information obtained and imparted regarding the condition of Southern public opinion. According to one editor, Montgomery had been of particularly distinguished use in respect to the last of the foregoing accomplishments.[16] Mr. DeBow believed that the latest convention proceedings contained many very interesting debates and that the meeting was at least a favorable occasion for some of the noblest of Southern oratorical efforts. He regretted the infusion of bitter dissension but would not question that eventual good would result from the discussion, which was tinged with a truly Southern tone; and there was much hope for the future.[17]

Nor did Gothamites fail to observe the Montgomery commotion. There were the usual invectives: "Ignorant, gassy, absurd"; but not unworthy of some attention as an exponent

[14] New Orleans Picayune, May 20, 1858. Savannah Republican, May 10, 13, 18, 20, 1858.
[15] Richmond Enquirer, May 26, 1858.
[16] Charleston Mercury, May 19, 1858.
[17] DeBow's Review, XXIV, 574.

of Southern ideas.[18] The Herald was a little more attentive, though no more sympathetic. In Montgomery, wrote the editor of that paper, "the ultra pro-slavery men, fire-eaters, restless salamanders, desperate politicians, commercial regulators and vagabond filibusters of the sunny, swampy South have been holding their annual pow wow." However, he acknowledged that there were also a few respectable and intelligent gentlemen in the crowd, and in the same article and with language as equally vituperative as the above, he condemned the Northern abolition fanatics. Both classes of agitators were characterized by folly and delusion, and Spratt and Walker were no better than Wendell Phillips and Fred Douglas. The North had survived their overcharged zealots and the writer trusted the sensible slaveholders would do likewise.[19]

But there was yet another meeting of the voluble and indomitable Southern Commercial Convention. Vicksburg, in Mississippi, was the final battleground of what was now an oral conflict between secessionists and Unionists of the South. It was in May 1859 that they met and representatives were from nine good Southern states: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina, Tennessee and Texas. Gen. Charles Clarke, of Mississippi, the chairman, in his opening remarks, told the assembly that although their primary object was still the commercial independence of the South they were not a mere chamber of commerce to consider commercial relations abstractly and purely. But as Southern men they should discuss wisely and firmly everything that promoted the welfare of their "country", and political questions should not be eschewed. The question of commerce would open up a field of political discussion in regard to commercial regulations and the burdens imposed upon commerce. The discussions of manufactures and internal improvements would involve the question of governmental aid, constitutional power, duty of states or individuals. And

[18] New York Tribune, May 22, 29, 1858.
[19] New York Herald, May 14, 18, 1858.

agriculture would open up the grand question of slavery expansion.[20]

However, commerce was not entirely forgotten. At the suggestion of Judge Jones, of Georgia, the convention recommended the adoption of free trade and direct taxation. They also approved a scheme that aimed to establish a direct line of ships to run from Ghent or Antwerp in Belgium, to Memphis, Tennessee. An experimental trip was shortly to be made, arrangements having already been completed with the Belgian minister, and the Federal Government was asked to remove all obstructions to the navigation of the Mississippi. The Paris *Patrie* was also said to be rejoicing over the idea of commercial connection between the Southern States and the French empire, and regarded these states by their traditions to be the French part of the Union, as the Northern states constituted the English.[21]

There were several purely political measures to be attended to. At the request of Governor McRae, of Mississippi, Mr. W. D. Roy, of Vicksburg, introduced the following resolution: 1. Should a Black Republican be elected to the Presidency in 1860 the slave holding states would either have to be permitted to control their institutions themselves or they would resolve into a separate independent organization. 2. They advocated the permanent ascendancy of the United States in the Gulf of Mexico and to insure this end, the Gulf should be legally transformed into a sea, and the Isthmian transits to the Pacific be placed under American control. To facilitate this Americanization of the Gulf the people of the Southern States were urged first, to set about lawfully inoculating the denizens of Cuba with the democratic spirit, so as to develop the sentiment of freedom and franchise which was secretly cherished by the natives and liberals of that island; second, to make legal and political demonstrations of their desire to see the Isthmian states under American rule; third, to demand of the United States Government the abrogation of the

[20] New Orleans Picayune, May 11, 1859.
[21] DeBow's Review, XXVII, 96.

Clayton-Bulwer treaty and to request the government's moral and physical encouragement toward the development and spread of republican principles and free institutions throughout all the people and states of the North American continent.

Resolution number one was tabled and apparently not recalled, but the latter elaborate measure was approved by the convention. However, the vote was not unanimous. Ex-Senator Walker Brooke, of Mississippi, denounced these sentiments, recommended by Governor McRae, as disgraceful to the American people and contrary to the law of nations. Mr. Brooke presented a resolution urging both political parties in the South to abandon their organizations, and to hold no more state or national conventions. Mr. McLemore, of Alabama, moved that the commercial convention be organized into a permanent political body, the members of which should be elected by the people. These two proposals were not accepted.[22]

Then came the slave trade proposition, and Mr. Spratt, its champion, with three proffered resolutions: 1. Slavery being right there can be no wrong in enhancing its utility. 2. The renewal of the foreign slave trade is therefore expedient and proper. 3. A committee consisting of one person from each slave state should be appointed to consider the ways and means of reopening this traffic.[23] Urging the adoption of these measures, Mr. Spratt promised that the slave trade would regain for the South its lost prestige in the Union and would stimulate her material progress by providing a source for much needed labor. Their population had increased but there had been no proportionate advancement in the number of their slaves, and much of their labor had been drawn away from the older states to supply the West. Now hireling labor with the form and spirit of democracy were spreading through Delaware, Maryland, Kentucky, Virginia, and Missouri, entering into Southern cities, slipping, creeping into schools, pulpits, even into the halls of legislation;

[22] Ibid., XXVII, 95-100, 360. New Orleans Picayune, May 11, 1859.
[23] DeBow's Review, XXVII, 96.

and so, "we are not alone in contest with the North, which bears the banners of democracy, but with the democracy itself, within the states, the cities, and the institutions of the South."

It was conflict not of sections, continued Mr. Spratt, but of systems, ideas. In the North they proclaimed that equality was the right of man and the idea had been to some extent accepted in the South. The controversy was between pure and slave democracy and not even secession would end this struggle—it would only be postponed. Some day slavery would be compelled to wage an even deadlier contest with its enemies at home. The South must prepare for the future, must become powerful, aggressive politically and morally. Slavery must be extended and increased. They must have slaves for material improvement, for their anticipated diversification of industry, for a proper balance of their social system, and for the poorer members of the ruling race. To preserve their political rights within the Union, there must be political power. For political power there must be states and population, and such a population as would prevent the disturbance of their existing order could only come from Africa. This was the only measure that could meet the issue and the issue must be hastened. If the foreign slave trade was permitted the South would be powerful and wealthy within this Union; if not permitted, but yet approved by Southern sentiment, it would make them a strong and independent confederacy. Rights, liberties, and institutions were more worthy than Union. They must be free to expand, if necessary, by armed resistance to the Federal Government.[24]

The Honorable H. S. Foote, of Mississippi, spoke in opposition to the resolutions. He asserted that Mr. Spratt's invitation for aggressive action against the Federal Government was treason, and aimed at destruction of American laws and the Union. Mr. Foote was for moderation and peace and believed it was for the Supreme Court to decide the constitutionality of laws. He approved of slavery but would favor only its natural increase. Too much labor would depreciate

[24] Ibid., XXVII, 205-209.

the value of the products. The value of slave property was proportionalte to the price of cotton and if the price of slaves were diminished in the market, the poor man would still be unable to buy negroes because the capitalists would have monopolized the market. The demand for cotton abroad, maintained Mr. Foote, would be precisely the same without the importation of slaves as it would be with it. Let the price of slaves be reduced and the permanency of the institution would come down, for every man valued his property according to its intrinsic worth. Moreover slave labor was becoming unprofitable in the Middle States and in a few years, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia and others would be compelled to emancipate their slaves. The speaker then asked the delegates: "Would you be willing to shoulder your musket in vindication of slaveholding rights—would you be willing to fight for them and risk your domestic peace and happiness if your slaves were only worth five dollars a piece? The permanence of our system depends on keeping the prices high."

The time was not propitious for the repeal of the slave laws, continued Mr. Foote, and they should not agitate the question upon the eve of a presidential election when energies of the whole North were concentrated on their overthrow. When the Black Republican were elected there would be enough slaves already in the states to care for without looking to Africa for more negroes. By the natural rate of increase the slave population would be between nine and ten millions by 1885 and these would be found mostly within ten or eleven extreme Southern territories, for the border states would by that time have emancipated their negroes, and the slave holders would then have a sufficient majority to change the Constitution. Moreover, the slave trade would only benefit the North. She would invest capital, furnish ships and seamen, and then pour a flood of wild Africans on the South to decrease the value of Southern agriculture, increase her cares and burden and bring the opinion of Christendom against the American people.

Several other delegates participated in the debate on the slave trade. Mr. Walker Brooke, of Mississippi, opposed Spratt's resolution, first, because it was contrary to the principles of humanity, and second, because the South would not gain by it. Such theories as were propounded in the convention, said Mr. Brooke, would stamp the United States as an Ishmaelite among the nations of the earth, an enemy of all mankind. The North had abolished slavery because it became unprofitable and the increase of slave labor in the South would engender a similar situation. The slave trade laws were constitutional and he appealed to the Southern people to maintain them as long as they remained on the statute book.[25] Mr. Delafield and Col. I. M. Patridge, of Vicksburg, declared the resolutions were inexpedient and foreign to the purposes of the meeting. The Honorable J. D. McRae, of Mississippi, believed England and France were interested in the culture of cotton in their own colonies and were therefore opposed to progress in the Southern States. He wanted African labor to diversify agricultural pursuits and to build railroads and works of internal improvement. Colonel Isaac N. Davis, of Mississippi, advocated the repeal of the African slave laws and spoke of the doctrine of state rights and how those principles were involved in the slave trade question. Mr. DeBow said the repeal of the laws did not imply the propriety of resuming the African traffic but would only vindicate the rights of states to decide for themselves.

Mr. Humphreys, of Mississippi, contended that the question to be considered was not whether the African labor supply ought to be opened but how it could be legally opened. Four such methods had been advocated and the convention ought to decide which was the best. The repealers proposed a repeal of the United States slave trade acts. The nullifiers would by state action annul those acts because of alleged unconstitutionality. The adjudicators intended to agitate in order to procure from the United States Supreme Court a reconsideration of those laws. The progressive state rights

[25] Ibid., XXVII, 360.

men took the ground that repeal was impracticable, since it would require the consent of all the Southern and some of the Northern states. The slave selling states of the South would not vote for repeal and of course no Northern state could be expected to favor it. Nor could the Democratic party succeed with a platform in favor of reviving the slave trade. Repeal therefore, as well as nullification and re-adjudication, was deemed impracticable. Mr. Humphreys believed the only method of bringing about a prompt and practical supply of African labor was by adopting the apprentice system. Mr. Moody, of Mississippi, also favored this last method, and later a committee was appointed to examine the apprentice system of labor and to report at the next convention.

By a vote of 44 to 19 the convention finally decided that all laws, state or Federal, prohibiting the foreign slave trade ought to be repealed. Tennessee and Florida voted in the negative and the South Carolina delegation was divided. Colonel Patridge, of Vicksburg, offered a protest against the action of the assembly. The language of the protest was however deemed indecorous and disrespectful and the chairman refused to listen to it. Mr. Moody, also of Mississippi, appealed from the decision of the chair. The appeal was sustained by Messrs. Moody, Brooke, and Foote and opposed by Messrs. Jones, of Georgia, and Kennedy, of Alabama. By a large majority the protest was declared out of order; whereupon Messrs. Foote and Patridge immediately resigned their seats in the convention and retired.[26]

In the opinion of the minority, the resolutions on the slave trade approved by the convention did not embody the sentiments of the states represented. They were contrary to the spirit of the state constitution and to state laws. State legislatures, it was shown, had failed or refused to sanction the policy of reopening the slave trade and there were recent laws on the statute books of at least ten Southern states prohibiting the introduction of African slaves within their bor-

[26] Ibid., XXVII, 99, 100, 200, 468 ff.

ders. The minority further denied that the delegates at the convention were representative or aware of the true Southern sentiment. The resolutions were impolitic and antagonistic to the peace and perpetuity of the Union and unfavorable to the future peace and happiness of the Republic. The meeting was sustained by violent disunionists counseling the South to armed and bloody opposition to the American Government. Such agitation, it was declared, was unlikely to result in practical good, but would lead to undue excitement and would engender a greater hostility to Southern institutions by strengthening the Black Republicans and supplying the enemies of the Union with a plausible pretext to hasten Southern secession. They were not willing to place themselves in an aggressive attitude towards the Union on the question of slavery and would as true Southern patriots remain loyal to their constitutional obligations and to their fraternal requirements to all the United States. This minority protest was signed by nine Mississippians: H. S. Foote, W. Brooke, I. M. Patridge, R. E. Crane, E. Emanuel, J. Regan, G. V. Moody, R. H. Crump, and A. Burwell.[27]

Gen. Clarke, the chairman of the meeting, closed the convention with the following portentous words: "In the great contest that may arise hereafter I trust you will be found on the same side as myself and my hand and heart will be with yours and I will march with you shoulder to shoulder." The Vicksburg convention and with it the entire movement for economic independence and for a united south, came to an end amidst loud and stirring applause. The program in this tragic drama called for yet another scene, another meeting in Atlanta. But it was the last act and by November 1860, the fatal climax was evident to all and the attention of the South was now claimed by more effectual and more conclusive counsel.

The commercial convention in the beginning was an honest and sincere effort to improve the material and political interests of the Southern States, however mistaken in its

[27] Ibid., XXVII, 470.

plans and assumptions. The South was losing her leadership. The North was gaining power. And the underlying reason for the disparity was economic, for the free states were growing wealthy while the slave states were at a comparative standstill. So to regain their dominance and to maintain their peculiar system the Southerners met at these frequent commercial conventions. They failed to accomplish their purpose because the people refused to question the sanctity of slavery and the despotism of cotton. But the meetings were not without influence; for they did arouse a spirit of inquiry and contributed largely to that consolidation of sentiment which led to secession and the sword. Only a bloody civil war would decide whether the American Union was to be ruled by masters of plantations or by captains of industry.

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